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GAMBETTA

BY

PAUL DESCHANEL

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FOREWORD

When M. Louis Battifol asked me for a book on Gambetta, and expressed a desire that its publication should coincide with the signing of Peace, I felt it impossible to decline the honour. I wrote these pages during the rare moments of leisure allowed to me by my duties in the Chamber; and thus, in a certain sense, I lived through the two wars at one and the same time. I disregarded all panegyrics, all pamphlets, all legends, whether flattering or not: I sought the truth alone—and no homage could be greater. I have ignored the enthusiasms and hot-headed passions of our youth, and even the claims of gratitude—for it was Gambetta who launched me on the life of politics. In this book, only one passion is to be found: the passion for France. He loved her ardently. He gave his whole life for her. He will live in history as the personification of the nation's resistance in 1870. His ideal was always the regeneration of his country. His memory is for ever associated with the restoration of justice.

P. D.

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PART I

BEFORE THE WAR

(1838–1870)

LIBRARY
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CHAPTER I

HIS CHILDHOOD AND EARLY CAREER

Montfaucon and Cahors—Student Life (Jan., 1857–June, 1861)—Intellectual Development—The Young Lawyer (June, 1861)—The Buette Case (July, 1862)—The Young Friend of the Five—An Unelected Deputy (1868).

AMONG the glories of the Gulf of Genoa, on the lowest slope of the Apennines, between Savona and Varazze, a little town looks out upon the sea from the shelter of two headlands. It is Celle in Liguria, the cradle of the Gambettas. From Celle Baptiste Gambetta, Léon's grandfather, sailed to the coast of France with the produce of his own coast, sweet oil, macaroni, vermicelli and pottery; then, from Cette, the Languedoc Canal took him to Toulouse, and he explored the tributaries of the Garonne in search of fresh markets. In 1818 he arrived at Cahors, and, liking the place, he settled down there with his three sons, Paul, Michel and Joseph, and started a crockery and grocery business in the Place du Marché. In 1824 the statesman's father, Joseph, in accordance with the custom in such families, made a voyage to Chili as a ten-year-old cabin-boy, in a sailing-vessel from the Genoese Riviera: a vessel that carried as passengers—so it is said—Garibaldi and the priest Mastaï, afterwards Pope Pius IX. In his old age Baptiste returned to Celle to die, taking with him his eldest son and leaving the two others at Cahors. When their success in business was assured they began to trade independently. Joseph opened the Genoese Bazaar in the Place de la Cathédrale, and on July 25, 1837, at the age of twenty-three, married a girl of twenty-two named Marie Magdeleine Massabie, the daughter of a chemist

at Molières, in Tarn-et-Garonne. Of this marriage was born, on April 2, 1838, on the second storey of a house in the Rue du Lycée, the future Minister of National Defence.

Genoese, Gascon and Cahorsin—such was Gambetta. Genoa gave him adaptability, charm and talent; Gascony gave him dash, daring and natural eloquence; Cahors gave him his tenacious will. The Genoese Riviera evokes visions of stormy achievement, of great lives of adventure, of Columbus, Sixtus IV., Julius II., Mazzini, Garibaldi; Cahors recalls scenes of bitter struggle and fierce, tenacious resistance to besieging foes; thus the orator's eloquence at times was like Bessières or Murat charging the enemy. There was in him something akin to those practical doges who succeeded in founding the firmest of governments amid the distractions of civil strife. The people of the Ligurian coast have deeper emotions, more violent and unbridled desires, and more imperious wills than ours. It was natural that he should dare greatly, that he should seize Fate as she passed and force her to follow him.

When he was four years old his father placed him in the Petits-Carmes, at Cahors. When he was eight his life was endangered by an internal complaint that made him ill for a month. He was believed to be dying: the same malady troubled him all his life, and finally killed him at the height of his powers, both mental and physical. His next school was the little college at Montfaucon. At the age of ten he was a republican, writing to his father: "Vive Cavaignac!" (*sic*), "Down with Bonaparte!" A year later an accident cost him his right eye. During the holidays he was in the habit of visiting one of his father's neighbours, a cutler by trade. One day a workman was drilling a hole in a knife-handle of horn. The child, in his anxiety to watch the work at close quarters, hid beneath the bench, then suddenly sprang out from his hiding-place. At the same instant the drill passed beyond the edge of the bench and struck the eye of the boy, who fainted away, and was drenched with blood.

When he was fourteen he entered the Lycée at Cahors. His professor of rhetoric, M. Arnault, a man well versed in

the humanities, divined his abilities. A speech that purported to be addressed by Étienne Marcel to the States-General of 1356, but was signed Léon Gambetta, went the round of the Lycée. He already loved Rabelais. He knew the *Olynthiennes* by heart, and never forgot them; and seven years later, when in the country with Clément Laurier, the young lawyer one evening recited a speech of Demosthenes with an imaginative fervour that won the admiration of Villemain.

At the age of eighteen he was admitted to the degree of Bachelor. The boy had long been dreaming of Italy, of Celle in Liguria; and his father took him there as a reward. His beautiful letters to his mother during these first travels were full of enthusiasm. He wrote of Montpellier, Lunel, Aigues-Mortes: "At Aigues-Mortes I saw the sea for the first time; it is much the most magnificent sight among the finest that Nature gives us"; of Nîmes and its arenas; of Marseilles—"Marseilles is at our feet, and in the distance is Corsica, an enchanting and intoxicating picture that gives one a glimpse of the wonders of Italy"; of Italy itself; of Nice, where he was fated to lie in his last sleep, in ground that was no longer Italian, but French; and of the splendour of the Genoese Riviera, where every turn of the Corniche reveals new beauties. In every drop of his blood was a passionate love for that Latin sea, whose son indeed he was.

At last he came to Celle and its pretty late-Renaissance church, with the rare marbles, and the pictures by Raphael's beloved pupil, Perino del Vaga, and the rich embroideries given by the Queen of Naples. Here he found his grandfather, with "the most adorable old head anyone ever saw, and magnificent hair, soft as that of a boy but whiter than snow, and a skin whiter than his hair, and a smile on his little pink lips, and his whole face lit up by a pair of still brilliant little black eyes"; and here, too, were friends, sailors and fishermen, honest, serious folk, inured to hard work, "with something in them still of the rocks and mountains," as Dante said. Here, in a narrow, climbing street, a commemorative tablet shows the simple house with a two-windowed frontage,

where Joseph was born when imperial France encroached on Lombardy. There I once saw Gambetta's cousin, Angelina Ghersi, a net-maker, whose mother was Joseph's sister: a true Gambetta, with the same profile, the same colouring, the same vivid, alert, magnetic glance, the same fire in eye and speech, despite her seventy-seven years. She told me secrets. "When Léon was here," she said, "he lived on the shore. He wanted to marry my sister, who was better-looking than I, but his father was against it because she had no dowry."

The Saracen origin of these people is evident. All along this coast the Phœnician type, dark colouring with the nose arched, can be distinguished from the Ligurian type, chestnut hair and light eyes. Gambetta has been called a Jew. The Gambettas have been Catholics for generations, and strict Catholics, moreover; several of Léon's uncles were priests.

After Celle the travellers visited the battlefield of Montenotte: "It was there that Bonaparte performed his wonders, and won glory and Italy. Before seeing this country one regards Bonaparte as a great tactician, but when once one has seen his battle-grounds one begins to say 'He was the God of War!'"

Next came Genoa the Superb, and her palaces. He who in later years could discourse so understandingly of Memling, Van Eyck and Reynolds, of Turners, Corots and Millets (he never liked music: it actually repelled him), would no doubt have described to his mother the incomparable Titians of the Palazzo Rosso, and the alluring woman whom the painter loved, if the galleries of these great houses had at that time been open to such humble visitors.

They returned by way of Turin, the Alps, Savoy, Grenoble and Lyons. He came back to his home dazzled and enchanted, with a heart eager for further adventures, other delights and other dreams.

His father, who had worked long and hard, and knew the value of money, feared the unknown for his son; he wished to make a sound merchant of him and keep him in the counting-house. But the women—his mother, sister and aunt—foresaw a different sort of future for him. The mayor

of the town, M. Achille Bessières, who had his eye on the boy, came to their aid. The father yielded at last, and sent him to Paris to study law. He was then nineteen. His wings were spread and his star was in sight: in ten years' time he was to conquer Paris—and fame.

Then followed the life of a poor student in the Quartier Latin. He slept under the roof in biting cold, "feasted on eighteen *sous* a day," and wrote by the light of a street-lamp. He hoped, with the help of one of his former masters at Montfaucon, to find some pupils, but "Fortune is so full of caprice, especially in her dealings with young men, as Charles V. said!" In order to buy some winter clothes he arranged to correct Greek proof-sheets for a printer during the vacation.

His father was at first disturbed and irritated, but said nothing. To reassure him and win him over, the boy made a joke of his hardships, showing not only deep respect but also considerable skill in his dealings with a parent who loved him truly, but seemed harsh because he knew the cruelty of a struggle with poverty, and because he feared Paris. It required constant diplomacy on the boy's part to secure the modest supplies that enabled him to live while he was climbing the ladder. When once his studies were finished, he felt, he could decide whether to follow his father's trade or to attempt a legal career. His letters, which overflow with gratitude and tender feeling, give evidence of a heart of gold and an immense craving for love. They reflect perfectly the virtues of the French family: hard work, economy, mutual devotion, and—though these sons of the people must count every franc and even every copper—the greatest delicacy of feeling, the greatest moral refinement. Every word in them is innocent, refreshing and wholesome.

In his cold lodging he sees, mentally, the "red and green" waters of the Lot, the narrow valleys with their rough yellow soil and dark grass, "the rugged landscape where, between two mountain sides, is hidden the house which shelters certain heads that are dearer than the daylight"; and he breathes the scent of the orange-blossoms and verbenas that make that southern landscape sweet. And these fragrant scenes are

illuminated here and there by the great hope that is dawning on the horizon and gilds the mountain-tops: "France is awakening. The time is near. You will smile, perhaps; it is true that I am too impetuous; but the people's sufferings are so great that a moment of enthusiasm may well be forgiven!" (June 9, 1857.)

In his twentieth year he was present at the trial of Orsini. On the one side was Chaix d'Est-Ange, and on the other were Jules Favre, Crémieux and Liouville. "I have been preparing my heart, my ears, and my memory for a week. O Fate! when shall I be preparing my words?" He practised on a funeral oration by Bossuet, and speeches by Mirabeau, Vergniaud and Danton, trying to imitate the different orators by varying the intonation, inflexions and rhythm.

On October 29, 1859, during the vacation, he made at the *mairie* at Cahors the declaration imposed by law upon all children born in France to foreign fathers. Thenceforward he was French.

At the age of twenty-two he passed all his examinations with brilliant success. "The high road lies open before us; we must take it resolutely, head in air, and fight well. I am quite ready. . . . Oh, how I am longing to speak. My tongue is on fire. *I am afraid of being afraid,* as Montaigne said. When will that grand day come? I read and re-read the masters of speech; I learn all I can by going to the theatre and the courts; I look everywhere for lessons and models. Why should I hide it from you, dear father? I am devoured by ambition. But, after all, ambition is not a crime! Pride is a force, and, with work for a lever and necessity to spur him on, what cannot be achieved by an enthusiastic and honest youth, who has his father's whole life for an example?" (February 27, 1860.)

His instructors urged him to try for a fellowship and a professor's career, but this time it was his fate to fail. He was called to the Bar, and took the oath on June 8, 1861.

His father wished him to practise at Cahors, but the women of the family insisted on his being left in Paris. His father

consented on one condition: that the young lawyer's aunt, Jenny Massabie, should join him there and preside over his modest establishment. To the last Gambetta gave a son's love to this aunt, who devoted herself to him with single-hearted adoration: "I shall always be deeply grateful to her for her striking proof of affection in sacrificing her whole future to my happiness; for I know very well that her presence will change me completely, and that study will become my daily bread, instead of being, as hitherto, carried on by fits and starts."

For his contemporaries he became a centre, a rallying-point, a leader: he attracted them in Paris as he had attracted them at Cahors. And he talked, and talked, and talked! Every chair was his rostrum. This group of ardent youths met of an evening at the Café Procope, in the Rue de l'Ancienne-Comédie, as once Piron, Voltaire, Jean-Jacques, Diderot, d'Alembert and d'Holbach had been wont to meet, and Danton and his friends, and as Verlaine and Moréas met afterwards. There he practised his art, attacking, retorting, improvising on every kind of subject with magnificent assurance and the fury of one possessed—but the sort of fury that knows what it is aiming at and stops when it chooses—in a voice of thunder and a strong provincial accent, overflowing with life, bursting with energy, all fire and keenness, all impetuosity and magnetism.

Soon the left bank of the Seine no longer satisfied him, and he crossed the bridges. In the cafés of the boulevards he met and became intimate with Spuller, Hébrard, and the editors of the leading journals of the opposition: *L'Avenir national, Le Journal de Paris, L'Opinion, Le Réveil, Le Siècle, Le Temps, La Tribune,* etc. Meanwhile he worked in the chambers of M. de Jouy, a nephew of the dramatist.

On the death of Cavour he wrote "An Address to Young Italy," which was published in all the papers: "Cavour has died of patriotism, a glorious and devouring disease that attacks none but the great-hearted. Nations that aspire to greatness must, like heroes, be educated in the school of misfortune."

His self-confidence and enthusiasm increased day by day. On August 15, 1861, he wrote: "My dear father, I am taking advantage of this fête-day, when all the people are in the streets and all the lawyers in the country, to chat with you for a moment. The town is full of noises, and they all go on under my windows. I am thankful to escape for an instant from this tumultuous life, and to fly in thought to the calmness of the family circle, where happiness seems to consist in silence fraught with emotion. Yet it is of my emotions that I am going to talk to you. I am going to make my *début* on Thursday; my heart is beating fast, but it is with courage. I am longing to experience the baptism of the Bar; I shall never be so happy again; the first steps of a career have the glamour of mystery. During the past three months I have been listening to all the lawyers in the Courts, and, I say it without pride, my hopes are twice as high as before. Six months ago I trembled to think of opposing the great men at the top of the tree; now, I am full of a feeling that has a strong resemblance to audacity; but it is an appropriate moment to quote Danton's version of the words of Christ: 'The audacious and the violent shall inherit the earth!'"

He was successful, and afterwards spoke every week. *La Gazette des Tribunaux* reports his first speech in the assize-courts, in a case concerned with false coin.

The *dossiers* filled him with delight: "From all these ivory-yellow papers there emanates, like an acrid scent, a troubled sort of consciousness that mounts to my brain and gives me a fever for work. It is almost grasping the palm with one's hand, to desire it so intensely!" (October 31, 1861.)

He was introduced to Ernest Picard, Émile Ollivier and Jules Favre; and in December was admitted to the Conférence Molé, over which he was soon to preside. The junior Bar entrusted him with the composition of an address to Berryer, to celebrate the latter's fiftieth year of legal practice.

On December 30, 1861, he wrote: "Thanks to you and all your efforts and sacrifices, dear father, I am at the dawn of a beautiful day! When noontide comes I shall go to you, and with my arms round your neck I shall say: Father, you made

my happiness, and I can best show my gratitude by bringing it to be shared with you."

When he lost a certain case in which Nicolet was his opponent, he avenged himself so thoroughly in the lawyers' conference that he was congratulated by Jules Favre and Cremieux. "Crémieux came up and pressed my hand and embraced me; he wanted to know my name, my age and whence I came. He foretold the most splendid future in the world for me, and invited me to go and see him regularly. I had tears in my eyes, I was drunk with joy." (February 14, 1862.)

These joyous fireworks on the part of ambitious youth were modified by a steady presentiment that a crisis was approaching: "The political situation grows blacker every day. One hears ominous cracking sounds. Who knows whether the time is not at hand, as Christ said? The minds of the public are greatly disturbed: the debates in the Chambers, the industrial crisis, the financial crisis, and the general difficulties that beset the country have darkened the horizon profoundly. It is a time for heaving the lead, to find out where we are and whither we are going. Towards a change, that is certain; God grant it may be a useful change and a good one!" (February 25, 1862.)

"In the Conférence des Avocats," he writes in the following month, "I was cheered, and almost carried aloft in triumph. So many mouths congratulated me all at once, so many hands were held out to mine in gratitude for the pleasure I had given—so their owners declared—that I was wild with delight, and so I am still as I write to you. I am in a state of rapture, and I send you my success and joy as the finest bouquet for your birthday!"

He was just twenty-one when he wrote, on April 12: "How can I describe my successes to you? They fulfil all my wishes. Yesterday I secured a favourable verdict that gave me great pleasure. A poor old woman was prosecuted for causing the death of a little child who had been placed in her care; her advanced age, her poverty and her innocence, in which I believed, filled me with the keenest sympathy for her.

I defended her with all the ardour at my command, and had the happiness of procuring her acquittal. Oh! as you will easily believe, there is no amount of money that can give us such delight or move us so profoundly. I shall have one of these performances ready for you some day, when I have you safe in Paris."

At Clément Laurier's request he wrote an unsigned sketch of Lachaud for *La Cour d'Assises* of May 10, 1862, in which his description of the "*grand avocat des passions*" was virtually a portrait of himself, of his own opinion and vision of himself—himself as he fain would be—untrammelled, spontaneous, natural, the impetuous debater, shattering the armour of his foe. "His speech is sudden as the lightning. When carried away by anger, he growls, like a lion tearing his prey. His natural vivacity fascinates and dominates his audience, leading them whither he will. He sees everything, grasps everything, guesses everything, and all in the space of a few minutes. He looks his opponent in the face, and it would seem as though that opponent was forced to provide him, on the instant, with the means of his own undoing. In a moment the full strength of his greatest gift bursts forth: that sovereign gift of speech, excited by the heat of debate. For it is on the spot, in the court, that he creates and conceives, moulds and gives life to his work. . . . There is no preparation, no arrangement of ideas: note-books are not for such as he! His memory is not a mere retention of phrases and words, but rather an acutely sensitive consciousness which retains every impression it receives, and in a moment can find all the ideas that have struck it, reviving them more than recollecting them." This anonymous portrait, drawn by him at the age of twenty-four, gives us an accurate sketch of himself in later years.

His activities were many: he devoured everything that came his way. His delight in Rabelais persisted, and he could recite Grandgousier's letters to Gargantua by heart. He loved the sense of reality, the sense of proportion, the "expedient"; he loved, too, the excitements of the vivid language that, in the burning desire to prove and convince,

breaks into tongues of flame, or, in a positive orgy of reason, rolls on and on like the rising tide. In after years it was his boast that he possessed the famous copy of *Pantagruel* that the Regent used to read at Mass. He recited Hugo's poems, too: *La Légende des Siècles,* and *Les Châtiments.*

He was an admirer of Richelieu and Mirabeau, having the same conception of government and the same taste for diplomacy. The notes in which Mirabeau points out to the Court the necessity for reorganising the administration and re-establishing a strong Government, and the letters to the Comte de la Marck, especially appealed to him. He liked neither Rousseau nor Robespierre. Danton, on the other hand, attracted him; but in Danton's tragic greatness there was always a hint of the petty bourgeois; whereas in Gambetta there was a plebeian element, mingled with his artistic instincts and his professional tastes. Proudhon was his daily bread: "There is no more virile mind in our day, nor one to whom I owe so much as to him." Auguste Comte exercised a great and ever-increasing influence over him—Comte, who would have sacrificed progress to order, and hated instability, and desired a strong central authority; who preached the glorification of science and the necessity for depending upon reason, and took as one of his formulæ, "the immanence of justice."

In these things we see the man's growth. We see, too, the marked difference between him and the republicans of his day. He believed that the nation's sovereignty should be exercised through a strong Government. He had a taste and feeling for authority, combined with a natural tendency towards argument and compromise.

In March, 1862, the police invented a plot against the safety of Europe, and arrested about fifty persons, among whom was one Louis Buette, a mechanic. Though he was only twenty-two, his employers had already made him a foreman. He would not employ a counsel; he had no wish to defend himself; his only desire was to use the trial as a means of expressing his ideas and influencing public opinion. His sister appealed to Jules Favre, at that time *Bâtonnier* [Treasurer of

the Benchers], to save her brother. Jules Favre sent her to M. le Châtelier, who referred her to M. de Sal, who in his turn suggested Gambetta. "I will defend your brother as though he were my own!" he cried. He hurried to Mazas. Buette, in his surprise, at first refused help, but his extempore counsel won him over, and a friendship was begun that was only ended by death. Buette revealed to him the working-man's world: his sufferings and aspirations, his thirst for justice and his large-hearted idealism. There, in the little cell at Mazas, Gambetta for the first time came in contact with the proletariat; it was there that he learnt to know and love the generous, enthusiastic hearts of the people.

Two days later the fifty-four conspirators were brought to trial. The counsel for the defence included the cream of the Republican Bar: Crémieux, Emmanuel Arago, Jules Ferry, Charles Floquet and the younger men who were the hope of the party, Léon Renault, Spuller, Cresson, de Sal, Laurier, Cléry and Durier. Gambetta began to speak, throwing back his long black hair, and, with his eyes starting from his head, described in his resonant voice the laborious and blameless life led by Buette. But soon he passed from the defensive to the attack: "And you call yourselves a strong Government! You are only a Government by accident!" He quoted the trial of Jesus, paraphrasing the words of the Gospel, "thou art not Cæsar's friend"; he recalled the Passion, and pointing to the figure of Christ that hung above the judges, cried: "*Insidiatores!* Spies! Yes, they were spies who nailed Him to the Cross!"

Buette was condemned only to three months' imprisonment. Crémieux, introducing Gambetta to his friends, said: "This is M. Gambetta, the great success in the trial of the fifty-four." He made him his secretary. "It will be a great pleasure to me to see your ability developing under my eyes. We shall have good cause to be very proud of it some day, if you combine persistent work with your natural gifts." (October 16, 1862.)

He owed much to Laurier's efforts. It was Laurier who introduced him to Crémieux, and took him to see Villemain,

the permanent secretary of the Académie Française. "I am in the seventh heaven!" he declared.

Since fees were now coming in, he left the Rue Vavin for the Rue Bonaparte. The little table of his new dwelling was surrounded on Sundays by the faithful Pephau, Fieuzal, Cendre and Spuller, who discussed his old wine from Cahors and tasted the excellent dishes of his own country. "If fortune continues to smile on me," he says, "I shall soon be able to leave off burdening my family; indeed, who knows whether I might not be useful to them? I long for nothing so much as the day when I can show my gratitude for the sacrifices they have made for me."

On January 1, 1863, he writes to his mother: "How can I express to you, my sweet mother, all that I feel deep down in my heart? What words can make you understand my gratitude and love? Are you not the bravest of mothers and most devoted of wives? Ought I not to be the most loving, the most dutiful and the proudest of sons? I will see to it that the rest you have so well deserved shall some day be a glorious rest, happy and undisturbed. Courage! the goal is near. . ."

To his father he says: "I am getting into my stride! People are beginning to take note of me, and I greatly hope that before many years are gone I shall be able to say, as I kiss the two persons to whom I owe everything: 'This is what I am, this is what I am worth: it is your work, and it is my joy to bring it to you!' . . ." Then, alluding to a "little disagreement" on a question of philosophy, he goes on: "Our little quarrel only arose from a misunderstanding. It is not possible that you could have doubted my heart or my intelligence, or could have believed any casual rumour that was going about, with regard to my opinions and philosophical ideas. As for religious ideas, and the great idea of God, I am too rational, both in politics and ethics, to give it up. Moreover, as you very justly said, it is one of the most valuable resources of eloquence. So you may make your mind easy; to that I am still faithful." (March 9.)

From that time forward he was associated with all the most

influential men of the Republican party. He was a member of the committees formed to draw up the lists of candidates for the legislative elections of 1863. In the Quartier Latin, Adolphe Guéroult, editor of *L'Opinion Nationale,* one of the principal organs of the Democratic party, was opposed by Prévost-Paradol, the brilliant product of the Écoles Normales, the champion of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary liberties, and the favourite of Orleanist salons. Gambetta believed that the Empire could receive no harder blow than the election of the young and mordant controversialist of the *Journal des Débats*; he alone, of the Republicans, entered the lists on behalf of Prévost-Paradol. This first act of his public life is the key to many others. He was exuberant, enthusiastic and vehement, it is true, but political expediency had the last word with him. He weighed, he measured, he calculated. Was it not he who said: "What is needed for governing France is violence in speech and moderation in action"? From the very beginning, as we have seen, the complexity of his temperament was apparent.

But there was another and a more profound reason that led him to support Prévost-Paradol against Guéroult: his views on the progress of European affairs coincided, from this time forward, with those of the former, and were opposed to those of the latter. Like the whole democratic school since 1815, Guéroult had, in the name of the principle of nationalities, embraced the cause of "Protestant and Liberal" Prussia, in opposition to "ultramontane and despotic" Austria. Three years later Guéroult's paper, *L'Opinion Nationale,* with all the organs of the Left, rejoiced over Austria's defeat at Sadowa. Paradol and his friends, on the contrary, considered that two nations were defeated in that battle, Austria and France. Gambetta was of that opinion, and was in this respect far more in sympathy with Thiers and the Orleanists than he was with the Republicans. His letters and intimate conversations leave no doubt on that subject. But in this year 1863 he was still obscure and unknown; his opinion was of no account.

This year was marked by a serious crisis in the history of the Second Empire. The party of the Opposition, which

since 1857 had boasted of only five members, Jules Favre, Ernest Picard, Émile Ollivier, Hénon and Darimon, was increased to thirty-five, among whom were Thiers and Berryer.

During this summer Gambetta appeared in a variety of cases: in Lorraine, Belgium, Alsace, Burgundy and Berry. "Ovations," he reports. "The future is at last growing bright. It is going to be radiant." In the autumn he was made much of at L'Epineau, Laurier's home.

On his return to Paris he constantly visited the Chamber. Though not yet a Deputy himself, he knew all the Deputies, and followed public affairs closely. One day, when the hall was full and there was not a seat left, a Deputy approached the President, the Duc de Morny, and begged for a corner for the young friend of the Five. "M. Gambetta shall be put into my tribune," answered Morny. "I have heard a great deal of him, and shall not be sorry to see him." And, raising his glasses, the President proceeded to inspect the young barrister.

Thiers said of him: "If he does not warp his judgment in private discussions, his qualities will soon become conspicuous." "An atmosphere of political genius surrounds him," said another.

He appeared in some literary lawsuits, which brought his name before the world of writers. "The audience," he writes on November 8, 1863, "was adorned by some of the most eloquent tongues in Paris, from the editors of the *Figaro* and the *Nain Jaune* to the solemn secretaries of two Academies. I enjoyed a good hour of vivacity and inspiration. This little success went the round of Paris."

In February of the next year he says: "Fortune smiles upon me. I agree with Mazarin: I believe in Fate! One always worships the gods that favour one. I have been successful everywhere beyond my hopes!" And in August: "*Forward!* That is my battle-cry!"

He was retained, with Jules Ferry, in the trial of the Thirteen, and played a brilliant part in several cases connected with the Press. In his defence of the *Revue du Progrès*,

which had been denounced in a charge by the Bishop of Orleans, Mgr. Dupanloup, he attacked the Solicitor-General. The editor of the review, Xavier de Ricard, who was present, describes the scene thus: "All the enthusiasm of the audience, which was numerous, was directed upon Gambetta, who, as he beat the bar furiously till its destruction seemed imminent, and withered the judges with his terrible one-eyed stare, took the Empire—so to speak—by the scruff of the neck and hauled it over the coals for all to see. The Empire had found its prosecutor." In this is foreshadowed the Baudin case, four years before it took place.

"Something must happen soon," he writes on March 30, 1865, "the present *régime* has now been in existence for thirteen years, and its Constitution and origin are still being discussed as though it dated from yesterday. This is a grave symptom of approaching death."

About this time he visited La Gironde and the Landes, to sound the feelings of certain constituencies; and in June of the same year he went with Laurier to Twickenham, to see the Comte de Paris. His enemies afterwards took him to task for this visit; but no doubt his motive in making it was the same that led him to support Prévost-Paradol. On both occasions his first words were, "I am a Republican"; but he knew that the Empire could only be overthrown by the union of the Legitimists, Orleanists and Republicans.

In the following spring he writes: "The political situation grows more acute; the Government is losing ground every day; its adherents are falling away on all sides; everyone believes that its imminent ruin is inevitable, and 1869 will be a decisive date for the Empire, as 1852 once was for the Republic. Meanwhile I am redoubling my efforts and my studies, that I may be prepared to take an active and worthy part in the coming events. I am keeping myself well informed in all affairs. . . ." In the summer he travelled with Laurier in Italy and Greece.

On May 26, 1867, he says: "I have been suffering a great deal with both my eyes. My injured eye had become decomposed, and was having a very bad effect upon the good one

After much serious thought, thanks to my excellent friend Dr. Fieuzal, I was introduced to an eminent oculist, Dr. Vecker, who has removed my right eye and will replace it with a false one, which I have already tried, and which suits me so well that anyone would think it was real. So for the future I shall be safe from all ills, and my left eye will lose none of its strength."

By June 11 he had recovered, and wrote: "During the last few days we have had a delightful meeting with Favre and Berryer. I was publicly embraced by my chief, Jules Favre, before everyone, as the representative of the younger men."

With Jules Favre he was briefed in a case at Cahors, and the famous counsel arrived at the Law Courts with Gambetta's sister on his arm. The grocer's son was unknown in his native town; but it learnt to know him now.

In June, 1868, Challemel-Lacour founded the *Revue politique et littéraire,* which continued to appear until February, 1869. For three months Gambetta contributed to it, his first article being on the subject of political economy. "The theory of free trade between all the markets of the world," he said, "is not an inflexible dogma, to be applied rigorously and instantly to all communities, whatever their social conditions or their form of government." Next, he produced some masterly pages on General Grant, whom he presented in a new guise, foreseeing both the military leader in him and the future guide of a free democracy. "By democratic institutions genius is inevitably doomed to be virtuous. Grant is not yet forty-six, and he has for ever associated his name with the sublimest form of glory: he has saved his country. General Grant, for all his halo of glory, is but the servant of Congress, the subordinate of the law." This was followed by other articles on various topics: the administration of Haussmann, Préfet of the Seine, the budget, and the session of 1867–1868.

In August of the same year he set out with Laurier to Rumania, with an introduction from Thiers to Prince Nicolas Bibesco: "Saint-Germain, August 4, 1868.—M. Gambetta, to whom I am giving this letter for you, is what we call in France a Republican. But he has more intellect and sound sense and

true wisdom than many of the most enlightened Conservatives, and I only wish that most of the party leaders had as much. No one knows the inside of Paris better than he, or could give you fresher and more accurate news of it. He is a very distinguished member of the junior Bar, and is using the vacation to educate himself by travel. Pray help him to bring home correct ideas of your country. In return, he will refresh the ideas that you took away about ours."

On his return the young barrister was more assiduous than ever in visiting the Legislative Assembly, and seemed almost to belong to it by right. The Deputies of the Left treated him as a colleague. He had a gift, a real genius, for politics —all that was needed was a spark to set it alight. It was the Baudin case that set fire to his fame—and to the Empire.

CHAPTER II

THE BAUDIN CASE AND GAMBETTA'S ELECTION AS A DEPUTY

The Baudin Case (14th Nov., 1868)—Gambetta is elected to the Legislative Assembly (23rd May, 1869)—His Maiden Speech—His Speech on the Plebiscite (April 5th, 1870)—The Students' Banquet (April 19th).

EUGÈNE TÉNOT, in his book *Paris en décembre* 1851, had recently reminded his readers how, on December 3, certain members of the Assembly had gone unarmed to the barricades to prevent the violation of the law. The youngest of them, Baudin, Deputy for the Ain, had been struck by a bullet and killed. When the story was told seventeen years later his grave was sought out, and found in a corner of the cemetery at Montmartre, neglected and smothered in grass. On All Souls' Day—the Day of the Dead—a number of men who had suffered for their opinions, and a few students, brought some flowers to this grave, and after making a few speeches in subdued tones, visited the tomb of Cavaignac.

Challemel-Lacour's *Revue politique*, the *Réveil* of Delescluze and Peyrat's *Avenir national* opened a subscription list with the object of raising a monument to Baudin. The list was headed by Berryer, who on December 2, in the Mairie of the tenth Arrondissement, had drawn up a decree deposing Louis Bonaparte, which was signed by 220 Deputies. Prévost-Paradol's name figured there, with Victor Hugo's, Edgar Quinet's and Louis Blanc's.

On November 14 Delescluze was haled before the *Tribunal Correctionnel* on a charge of "exciting hatred and contempt of the Government." Within these walls that were still vibrating with the echoes of Berryer's voice Gambetta approached

the bar, straightened his massive frame, and fixed the Bench with his strange stare. It was no defence that followed: it was an indictment—nay, it was an assault. The Empire, far from being the prosecutor, was placed in the dock. It was Baudin who was the prosecutor. The Solicitor-General tried to interrupt, but Gambetta silenced him with an unanswerable appeal to the judges: "You who are our judges, you who are entrusted with the enforcing of the law, you owe protection to us who defend it!"

"Has a case such as this," he asked, "ever been argued at any period of the world's history? No—never! Not in the days of Athens, nor in the days of Rome, was there ever to my knowledge such a duel as this, between justice and despotism, between law and force. . . . It seems to me that a court of law is the last place in which such outrages should be encouraged, for here the law, and nothing but the law, should speak and gain a hearing."

He attacked not merely the flaws in the Empire, but its very source. "On December 2, I say, there were gathered round a pretender a group of men of whom France until that moment had never heard—men of no talent, or honour, or rank, or position, the kind of men who in all ages have been the accomplices of despotic acts of violence, men to whom one might apply Sallust's description of the rabble that surrounded Catalina, or Cæsar's own portrait of his accomplices, the ever-present scum of orderly communities,

Ære alieno obruti et vitiis onusti,

or, as Corneille translates it,

Un tas d'hommes perdus de dettes et de crimes.

"It is with the help of such characters as these that institutions and laws have been overthrown through all the centuries, while the conscience of humanity is helpless, despite the long line of great thinkers and martyrs—Socrates, Thraseas, Cicero, Cato—who have raised their protests in the name of the religion that has been overthrown, the morality that has been injured, the justice that has been crushed beneath a soldier's boot!" The orator calls them to his aid; he bids

them add their voices to his, as he cries upon conscience and morality to revolt.

France, it was boasted, had been saved. "There is an unfailing test of the truth or falsity of such a statement. When a country is really passing through an acute crisis, and the very foundations of society are felt to be rocking, do you know what happens? Those whom the nation is accustomed to regard as its leaders, because they are distinguished by their powers of mind and character, come forward to save it. Now, when I appraise and analyse the worth of the men who profess to have saved the country on December 2, I cannot find among them one single man of mark; whereas, on the other side, I see, coming to the country's aid, such men as Michel de Bourges and Charras, both now dead—Ledru was already in exile—and many others of the very flower of all parties; such as, for example, our Berryer, the great man who lies dying, and only yesterday sent us a letter dictated by a noble heart, a last bequest of indignation, a proof that all parties are eager to support the claims of morality.

"Where were Cavaignac, Lamoricière, Changarnier, Le Flô, Bedeau, and all the leaders, all the honour and pride of our army? Where were M. Thiers and M. de Rémusat, and the authorised representatives of the Orleanist, Legitimist and Republican parties? They were at Mazas and Vincennes, these men who defended the law! They were on the way to Cayenne, or starting for Lambessa, these despoiled victims of an ambitious frenzy! That, gentlemen, is how France was saved! After that, do you think those who boast of saving society have any right on their side, when all they have done is to aim a blow at the country? On which side were genius, and morality and virtue? All crushed by violence!"

The president of the tribunal, Vivien, a converted Orleanist, thought he had allowed things to go far enough and it was his duty to intervene. But Gambetta spoke on. "Listen! For seventeen years now you have been the absolute, 'discretionary' masters of France—it is your own word. We will say nothing of the use you have made of her resources, of her blood, of her honour and her renown; but there is one

fact that is your most complete condemnation, because it is the measure of your own remorse: you have never dared to say, 'We will celebrate December 2 as one of the solemn festivals of France, we will make it a national anniversary.' And yet all the successive forms of government in this country have honoured themselves by honouring the day of their nativity. July 14 and August 10 were made festivals; the fateful days of July, 1830, were also celebrated, as well as February 24. Only two anniversaries, the 18th of Brumaire and December 2, have never been raised to the rank of solemn commemorations, for you know that if you tried to place them there they would be rejected by the conscience of the nation! Well, that anniversary that you have disregarded is claimed by us; we take it for our own, and we shall celebrate it always, unceasingly, every year; it shall be the festival of our dead, until the day when the country shall once more be master, and shall subject you to a great national expiation in the name of liberty, equality and fraternity."

Then, addressing the Solicitor-General, he said: "Ah, you shrug your shoulders!"

"Well, this is not argument!"

"Do not imagine," retorted Gambetta, "that I am afraid either of your scorn or your threats. Yesterday, at the close of your address, you said: 'We shall take precautions.' What! do you—Solicitor-General, an officer of the Crown, a man of law—dare to say you will take measures? What measures will you take? Is that not a threat? Well then, listen! this is my last word: You can strike us, but you can never dishonour us nor beat us down!"

And the orator, breathless like his audience, with streaming forehead, dishevelled hair and rumpled gown, fell exhausted into his seat. Then the hall shook with an outburst of cheers. The president tried to suppress them, but they only increased to the point of frenzy, and the crowd, who had not been admitted to the building, added their applause from without.

After three hours of discussion the tribunal sentenced Delescluze to six months' imprisonment, a fine of six thousand

francs, and the suspension of his civic rights for the term of his confinement. But the Empire had also received its sentence. Baudin, brought to life again, had rallied round him all the enemies of the Government, from Berryer to Delescluze. Gambetta suddenly found himself famous. The whole generation that the Empire had mown down arose again in his person. The dream that he had cherished so long was fulfilled in an instant. He burst headlong into history—the history that for fourteen years was to resound with his name. Thenceforward, like a soldier in battle, he would clutch at every bush, every stone, every wrinkle in the soil that could help him to advance, and fight, and win. "The opportunity is there," says Goethe; "it is your part, Faust, to seize it!"

Delescluze appealed, and on December 12 Gambetta again defended him.

In March of the next year he defended the journal *L'Emancipation* at Toulouse. "He is not merely a man," exclaims one who heard him on this occasion; "one is face to face with a force. We listened half stupefied; our hearts stood still. The audience was beside itself. We lost all consciousness of our surroundings."

After a visit to Italy with Laurier, Gambetta stood for Belleville against Hippolyte Carnot; and, Berryer's seat being vacant owing to his recent death, he also opposed Thiers and Lesseps at Marseilles, under the auspices of Barbès, as the candidate of the "irreconcilable Opposition." He accepted the Radical programme, which included the "separation of the Churches and the State" and the "suppression of standing armies." Before taking his seat it was as obligatory upon him to accept this programme as to take the oath: a formality to which certain very sensitive consciences were never able to submit. Later on, when he was reproached for having demanded the suppression of standing armies on the eve of 1870, he explained that he had intended them to be "replaced by national armies." It is certainly better to avoid the necessity for explanations of this kind: such ambiguities may cost the country very dear: but everyone at this time was in a false position. The standing army was considered

to be propping up the Empire, and every Republican believed that the Empire was incompatible with the sovereignty of the nation.

I have before me an unpublished speech that Gambetta delivered in the Théâtre Musset at Marseilles; the first rough sketch of his more finished discourses, a year later, in the Legislative Assembly and at the students' banquet, on the subject of the plebiscite. "Universal suffrage," he says, "can do everything except commit suicide. . . . It was not possible, in one day, to dispose of the country's future. . . . As the generations succeed one another they come to claim their rights, they come forward to protest against a decision in which they had no voice. It is in the name of national sovereignty that they claim their share of authority, for the true authority is the democracy." And here is an idea that was to become one of his favourite themes. Having expressed his respect for those who came before him, he goes on: "The democracy of to-day has entered upon a better and stronger phase. The benefit of the personal government beneath which our necks have been bowed, wounded and bleeding, is that it forces the democracy to ask itself frankly why it has failed where it ought to have triumphed, and why its cause, which is the cause of all, should once have been betrayed by the people. . . ." "The scientific spirit," he says, "should be introduced into the conduct of affairs." "Instead of vague propositions" we need "a definite method and system." Gradually his abstract Republicanism became more and more practical.

He was elected both in Paris and at Marseilles (May 23 and June 6, 1869), and decided in favour of the latter. Edgar Quinet wrote to him from Geneva: "The awakening of conscience in the soul of a great people—that is what your election demonstrates. This event makes the name of Gambetta one of the most powerful symbols of justice."

He was suffering from an internal malady as well as from his throat, and in July he visited Ems. In September he went to Montreux, but on October 12 he wrote to Laurier: "I can stay here no longer. I want to attend the meetings

announced by Jules Ferry in the *Siècle*. It will be high time to force that Left into governing public opinion. That is the serious complaint that is brought against us (for I do not dissociate myself from these just reproaches). We have never yet succeeded in leading, in dominating the public. That is the secret and well-deserved reproach that everyone aims at us, though they may not express it openly. The official authority being in its death-agony, the country is looking for a guide, and finds none. The third party, the Left Centre, and the Left, seem equally incapable of governing and of obeying. We shall be running the most serious risks unless this state of anarchy can be ended. The Left must decide to take the helm; it must appear as the visible successor—reassuring, prepared for anything—of the existing state of things which will so soon be in the past." He returned to Paris and installed himself at No. 12, Rue Montaigne, in November, 1869.

On January 1, 1870, he wrote: "My dear father, there is hardly any need to wish you a happy New Year, for you have already achieved the fulfilment of all your wishes: a pleasant retreat in charming surroundings on the borders of your native land, the most robust health, and the certainty of enjoying for many a year all the advantages that your merits and labours have earned for you. For my part, my hopes also run high; if I continue to regain my strength I shall soon make up for the time I have lost. However, I am beginning to be impatient of my long inactivity, and I feel I must shortly break silence. I am preparing to do so." Joseph Gambetta and his wife had recently retired to Nice, where they had a little house on the Villefranche road.

The elections had more than doubled the Republican minority in the Legislative Assembly. Crémieux, Grévy and Jules Ferry had been elected, and the "third party" was increased by fifty members. The Rouher Ministry had fallen, and the Empire was aspiring to transform itself into a Constitutional Monarchy with the help of the Cabinet formed by Émile Ollivier on January 2, 1870.

Gambetta ascended the rostrum for the first time on

January 10 to ask a question of General Le Bœuf, Minister of War, with regard to two soldiers who had been sent to Africa for taking part in an electioneering meeting. The General returned a biting answer; and Émile Ollivier, with a view to smoothing matters, said that the legal opposition and the new Government must confine their discussions to questions "concerned with measures." Gambetta replied that the question between the Government and the Opposition was one, not of measures, but of principle. "What we are demanding," he said, "is that the Monarchy should be replaced by a series of organised institutions consistent with universal suffrage and the sovereignty of the nation; that we should be given, peaceably and without a revolution, the form of government whose name you all know: a Republic."

He repudiated any desire to employ force; his ideal was to be realised by legal and persuasive means. "In the light thrown from this rostrum the conscience of the country will become more and more confident and convinced, and the moment will come, nor is it far distant, when the majority that will supplant you without any disturbance or disorder, shall be borne along by the irresistible force of logic to another order of things. You are but a bridge between the Republic of 1848 and the Republic of the future, and over that bridge we shall pass!"

He spoke again on several occasions, notably in connection with an application for a warrant against Henri Rochefort after the murder of Victor Noir, on the subject of the strikes at Le Creusot and on the freedom of the Press. But it was on April 5, 1870, that he really began his career in the Assembly, with a speech that placed him by universal consent in the first rank.

The Emperor, in the difficulties that beset him, had resolved to appeal to the country. After Grévy, Thiers, Ernest Picard and Jules Favre had addressed the Assembly on this subject, Gambetta rose. Repeating the ideas he had so often expressed in conversation, intimate letters, and electioneering speeches, and drawing inspiration from a recently published pamphlet called *L'Empire parlementaire est-il possible?* by

Gustave Chaudey (afterwards a victim of the Commune), he spoke for two hours. For the space of two hours, before a majority who shuddered at the very name of a Republic, he expounded with the utmost moderation the entire Republican doctrine.

After pointing out the failure of the Constitution of 1852, he showed that a plebiscite, as the word implies, is "the expression of a people's knowledge and beliefs with regard to a political fact"; that the people, therefore, should only intervene after discussion by their representatives, and public debates; that without these tests the country is in no condition to pass judgment, and the plebiscite is but a snare and a delusion. He seemed to be defining an appeal to the country similar to that which is practised in England after a dissolution—though the likeness was unacknowledged and indeed involuntary, since at that time he was dominated, like the whole Republican party, by memories of the Revolution and of 1848, and was still in favour of a single Chamber. He pointed out to the Monarchists who supported the Empire the danger to monarchical doctrines of putting the hereditary principle to the vote every time that the fundamental compact was threatened. He skilfully provoked interruptions by the Bonapartists, making them say that for them the doctrine of divine right meant the sovereignty of the people, and that the moment the people declared a Republic to be necessary they would bow to the decision. "I ask nothing better!" he said.

He carried his argument to its logical end: "Experience will show us that a parliamentary Monarchy is incompatible with universal suffrage. National sovereignty can only exist when the Parliament, having been elected by all the citizens of the nation, holds the command and has the last word in the treatment of political affairs. If a power exists that can keep Parliament in check, the principle of sovereignty is violated."

Then, as though foreseeing and prophesying the terrible events of a few months later, he went on: "I will suppose that the country desires peace and the executive power desires war.

If the Constitution is to respect the sovereignty of the nation the last word must lie with the electors; otherwise the national will is thwarted, the national sovereignty is violated, and the nation is defeated." Thus, step by step, he forced the Empire to observe the consequences of the method of election on which it was founded and from which it professed to draw its strength; he took from it, one by one, all its titles to existence. A Monarchy must, on pain of death, surround itself with monarchical institutions; universal suffrage contains the germ of a Republic, and will sooner or later bring it forth by a natural process of development.

To the politics founded on Holy Writ, "the code of the ancient Monarchy" so magnificently expounded by Bossuet, he opposed the new political code: "the politics founded on universal suffrage."

Finally he showed that the so-called responsibility of the Emperor had no existence in fact. "If you do not organise responsibility, there is someone who, in fateful moments, will not hesitate to appropriate it without any previous organisation: that someone is called Revolution."

War and revolution! The success of the speech, however, was considerable. The Empire seemed so solid! This academical discourse was of no consequence; there was no danger in enjoying this masterly eloquence, seasoned as it was with a hint of quite unreal catastrophe. And besides, at the heart of things, there was another point: the imperialist Right, without perhaps admitting it to itself, was the orator's confederate, and was not sorry that the new Ministry should be told: "You see whither your concessions lead!" There is nothing so useful for an orator as to win the approbation, whether secret or avowed, of his habitual opponents; they can do more for him than his own party, which contains his true rivals. The speaker's youth, his fatigue—for he had hardly recovered from his illness, which affected his powerful, earnest voice—his mingled strength and charm, the curious blending in his delivery of persuasiveness and vehemence, the maturity of his thought and language, his daring and his prudence, the moderation that tempered his ruthless logic—

all these qualities combined to produce, within the Chamber and without, a unanimous outburst of admiration for this master of eloquence, this member of the most advanced opposition who none the less preached the need for government. The Baudin case had won him recognition as a lawyer; it was his speech on the plebiscite that made him recognised as a political orator.

It is said that Guizot, after reading this speech, solemnly declaimed an answer to Gambetta's arguments, with no audience but his own son.

A few days later the students of the Schools entertained him at a banquet, the organisers being Étienne Lamy, Camille Pelletan and M. Jules Cambon. To understand aright the originality of his speech and the effect produced by it, we must recall the history of the Republican party between the years 1814 and 1848. Under the Restoration, with all the memories of the Terror on its shoulders, it had existed only in the obscurity of secret societies; under the Monarchy of July it had lived through insurrections, revolts, riots, imprisonment and exile; then, in 1848, came the invasion of the Assembly on May 15, followed by the insurrection of June; and in 1851 a fresh series of death-sentences, imprisonments and banishments to Brussels, London, Lausanne, Lambessa or Cayenne. The Republicans had behind them half a century of persecution and suffering. And now, here was this young man, face to face with other young men, saying openly to them: "The heroic age of the Republican party is at hand." He would have nothing to do with violence, nor force, nor with any of the old methods of conspiracy, riots and plots. The convulsions of childhood were over, he announced, and the maturity of Republicanism was at hand. Every man, he said, must devote himself to a life-long apostleship; a new method must be adopted—the education of the people to acquire authority by regular means, to discuss affairs soberly, to persuade public opinion, and so deserve to govern the nation. In these days, when the very word Republic was still associated in many minds with memories of the Terror and of the June insurrection, and

when Orsini's attempt was still recent, the interest and surprise aroused by such unexpected words can easily be imagined.

And, after all, had he not in his veins the blood of Italy, the blood of brilliant, splendid Genoa? Was he not the child of the sunshine and the blue sea? He had done with sterile, grey-toned theories. He was essentially a politician and a diplomatist: he was also a lawyer and a constructive citizen; can one picture him within the mildewed walls of a prison, or in the melancholy loneliness of exile? He was an artist, born to enjoy all the pleasures of earth, and flinging from him the dust of the past, he determined to eat freely of the golden fruit that hangs on the evergreen tree of life.

The Republicans, because they wished to put an end to monarchical authority, were opposed to all authority; and were opposed to the army, because the army supported authority. This was how Gambetta unravelled their sophistry: "I protest against those who attack the institutions of our Government because they are in the hands of a man who makes a bad use of them, and forget that in a democratic community the Government would consist of ourselves. Not that the Government should overstep its proper limitations. No, no! I have too much respect for the individual, too much confidence in the mutual development of the liberated powers and united energies of our citizens to require of the State anything resembling constraint. . . . But neither do I wish to overthrow this organisation that keeps society in a state of equilibrium. We need a Government. We need our Government!" Here we may recognise the views of Auguste Comte. For the first time the mind of a politician was guiding universal suffrage towards an organised democracy. And he boldly hazarded this profound phrase, which led him far and was always—perhaps wilfully—misunderstood: "To be right is to cease to be a party."

The electoral committees were convoked for May 8. Gambetta signed the Manifesto of the Opposition: "The people of France intend to replace personal government by the government of the country by the country. The new

Constitution on which you are summoned to give an opinion does not establish the government of the country by the country, but merely an imitation of it. The personal government preserves intact its most dangerous prerogatives, the right of making treaties and of declaring war, rights which, during fifteen years, it has exercised with such disastrous results to the country. Finally, the new Constitution leaves to the individual initiative of the head of the State a right that essentially belongs to every free nation, the right of reforming, when it considers it necessary, its fundamental institutions."

The result of the appeal to the country was 7,350,142 ayes, 1,538,825 noes and 112,975 blank voting-papers. Less than three months later war broke out.

CHAPTER III

THE QUARREL WITH PRUSSIA

The Causes of the War—The Growing Menace of Prussia—Napoleon III. and Bismarck (1862–1870)—The Ems Telegram.

THE mother of history is geography. The policy of a State is the result of its physical conditions. France has three strong frontiers—the sea, the Pyrenees and the Alps—and one that is weak, on the north-east. Hence her struggles with her eastern neighbours, formerly with Austria and to-day with Germany. The eternal task of her diplomacy has been to guard against the dangers threatening her on that side.

In 1862 the frontier of France, from Switzerland to the Palatinate, was the Rhine. She was separated from the rest of Germany by Luxemburg, the Palatinate and the Grand Duchy of Baden, and touched Prussia only at one point, near Sarrelouis. Prussia was cut in two by Hanover, Hesse and Nassau.

On September 23, 1862, Bismarck became head of the Ministry. His ambition was to unite the whole of Germany under the dominion of Prussia; and by one of the most extraordinary paradoxes in history he set out to accomplish his design by seeking the support of the very man who should have opposed it, the Emperor of the French.

This surprising circumstance needs explanation.

Napoleon I. said at St. Helena: "One of my greatest dreams was the agglomeration, the concentration of peoples who are geographically united, but have been disintegrated and torn asunder by revolutions and political events. Thus, in different parts of Europe there are more than thirty millions

of French people, fifteen millions of Spaniards, fifteen million Italians and thirty million Germans: I should like to have made each of these peoples into a single, united national body. The agglomeration of the thirty millions of French was already accomplished. As for the fifteen million Italians, their agglomeration was in a fair way to be achieved. The agglomeration of the Germans would have been a slower matter. How is it that no German ruler has ever perceived the natural conditions of his nation, or at least has never profited by them? This agglomeration will take place sooner or later through the force of circumstances; the initial impetus has been given, and now that I have fallen I do not think there is any balance of power possible in Europe apart from the agglomeration and confederation of the great peoples." (*Mémorial,* November 11, 1816.)

Napoleon III. came into power with his head full of his own youthful dream and his uncle's views, which he had already expounded in 1839 in *Les Idées napoléoniennes.* Here we may find both the opinion expressed at St. Helena and the whole programme of his future reign.

On becoming President of the Republic in 1850 he confided his scheme for the aggrandizement of Prussia by an alliance with France to his Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tocqueville, and to the Prussian Minister, Hatzfeld. "Have not France and Prussia," he said to the Prussian diplomatist, "the same kind of culture, the same ideal of enlightened liberalism, the same interest in emancipating and unifying nations and races?" And when, in October, 1850, the duel between Austria and Prussia—which was only to be fought out in 1866—seemed on the point of beginning, Louis Napoleon, who was awaiting the conflict as a good opportunity to intervene in Germany, called 40,000 men to arms and despatched them to the fortresses of the North and East, to be ready for events. The submission of Prussia at Olmütz made these preparations labour lost.

During the Crimean War he confided to Palmerston and Prince Albert his design to weaken Austria by emancipating the Germans, Italians and Poles.

Austria, at the moment, was seeking an alliance with France. Drouyn de Lhuys, Minister for Foreign Affairs, said to the Emperor: "Any policy except the Austrian alliance would be fatal." To stand aloof from Austria was to take the side of Prussia, whose credit in Germany was fed by the weakness of her rival. On May 5, 1855, the Emperor—without consulting his Minister, who immediately resigned—rejected the Austrian proposals.

At the conclusion of the Crimean War the Emperor, in spite of Walewski—for he, too, desired to keep in Austria's good graces—insisted that Cavour should be admitted to the Congress "on a footing of perfect equality." In July, 1858, he received him at Plombières, and this interview resulted in the Italian War.

It was foreseen by all intelligent people that the course of events beyond the Alps would lead to a fresh conflict between Austria and the growing power of Piedmont, while to humble Austria was to play Prussia's game. And it is certainly a fact that the Italian affair produced, or rather revived, the Danish affair. Napoleon, in order to serve Italy's designs against Austria, secured the connivance of Prussia by allowing her to take the Duchies. Profiting by the difficulties in which France had involved Austria, the potentate of the Mark of Brandenburg began the series of acts of violence by which, in the course of seven years, he defeated Denmark, Austria and France, established the dominion of Prussia over the rest of Germany, and made Germany the strongest Power in Europe.

Drouyn de Lhuys, now once more in office, pressed Napoleon III. to accept England's offer of support, to honour the signature that he had himself affixed to the Treaty of London in 1852 as a guarantee of the integrity of Denmark and to help the brave nation that had so loyally defended France during the wars of the First Empire. The integrity of Denmark was bound up with the rights of all European nations and the general interests of civilisation. How could the great highways of commerce, and the keys and gateways of the seas be allowed to pass into the hands of a State power-

ful enough to close them at will? Was Prussia, as mistress of the port of Kiel, thenceforward to command the North Sea and the Baltic?

France, most disastrously, did not interfere, and this act of violence paved the way for the others: 1864 was, so to speak, the first rough sketch of the fatal year 1866, and of that most terrible year, 1870.

After engaging in a war with Austria as an ally, Bismarck next stirred up a war against her. In dragging her into his unscrupulous adventure he created the circumstances that made it possible to turn and rend her. He was employing the tactics that he affected all his life—making the tool of one day the victim of the next.

In October, 1865, he went to Biarritz, to sound the Emperor. He saw that Napoleon's mind was obsessed with one idea: to give Venetia to the Italians. He said to Nigra on his way through Paris: "If Italy did not exist we should have to invent it." Armed with Napoleon's approval, he set to work without delay, and negotiated an alliance with Italy. Prussia promised Italy to give her Venice: Italy guaranteed to Prussia an equivalent gain in Germany.

A certain misguided section of the French nation continued to support Prussia, but all politicians of any insight understood that danger had changed sides, and that opposition to Austria had become an anachronism. They made ceaseless efforts to persuade the Emperor of his fatal misapprehension, and of the danger of trying to restrain Austria by nourishing a Power whose only object in subduing her was to take her place.

Their warnings, however, were thrown away; and when, on May 3, 1866, Thiers delivered in the Legislative Assembly the finest speech of his whole parliamentary career, prophesying German unity under the rule of the Hohenzollerns, it was already too late. On April 8 Piedmont had signed a secret treaty with Prussia, under the Emperor's auspices. The Austrians, surprised between two fires, were defeated at Sadowa, and the newspapers of the Opposition vied with those of the Government in rejoicing over Prussia's victory.

"The Revolution," said one of them, "has defeated Feudalism." Alas! France, without entering the field, had suffered the most serious blow that she had received since Waterloo.

William I. said: "Napoleon could and should have attacked the Prussian Army in the rear." And Bismarck pointed out what Napoleon should have done to prevent Prussia from completing the conquest of North Germany. "A small contingent of French troops on the Rhine, combined with the numerous forces of South Germany, would have obliged us to cover Berlin." It is true: a mere demonstration on the Rhine at that supreme moment might yet have made the Emperor of the French master of the situation.

On July 5, 1866, a Grand Council was held at Saint-Cloud. "This was the most decisive day of the whole reign," says M. Pierre de la Gorce, in his *Histoire du Second Empire*. The Ministers, and especially Drouyn de Lhuys, implored the Emperor not to miss this last chance of intervening. They succeeded at first in obtaining an order to mobilise: Marshal Randon, Minister of War, promised 80,000 men at once and 250,000 in twenty days' time. But the arguments of the Minister of the Interior, La Valette, changed the Emperor's mind, and made him fear so great an undertaking immediately after the Mexican expedition. The Italian party, and Napoleon III.'s own weakness for Germany, dissuaded him from hindering the triumphs of Prussia.

The Queen of Holland, a woman of considerable intellect, who was devoted to the Emperor and his family, wrote to him on July 18, 1866: "You are deluding yourself strangely! Your prestige has suffered more during this last fortnight than in all the rest of your reign. You are allowing the weak to be trodden down and permitting the insolence and brutality of your nearest neighbour to pass all bounds. I am sorry that you fail to see the danger of a powerful Germany. . . ." Magne, Persigny and many other faithful servants of the Empire shared her opinion.

William I. and his generals, as the price of their victory at Sadowa, claimed a portion of Austria's territory. But Bismarck foresaw that he would need the neutrality of

Austria in a struggle with France. He said to Karl Schurz, formerly American Ambassador in Spain: "Now it is France's turn. We shall have war, and it will be the Emperor himself who will bring it about. His hand will be forced by the necessity of maintaining his prestige. The war will break out in two years' time. We shall win. Germany will be united, to the exclusion of Austria, and Napoleon will fall."

Bismarck, to spare Austria, withstood his sovereign and the military party with desperate energy. He even suggested resigning. Finally the King yielded; and Prussia, being now certain of her ascendency in Germany, left Austria intact as a precaution for the future.

While Bismarck thus avoided wounding Austria too grievously and throwing her into the arms of France, with a view to a possible renewal of friendly relations with her, the Prussian Minister in Paris, Goltz, sought an interview with Drouyn de Lhuys, and asked him in Bismarck's name for some fragments of Saxony, Hesse and Hanover—that is to say, 300,000 souls. Drouyn de Lhuys refused the request. Goltz hastened forthwith to Saint-Cloud, and persuaded the Emperor to give him Hanover, Hesse, Nassau and Frankfort —4,500,000 souls. He then returned to the Quai d'Orsay and informed the amazed and horrified Drouyn de Lhuys of the Emperor's decision. "There is nothing left for us to do now," said Drouyn de Lhuys to his private secretary, Chaudordy, "except to weep."

This is a striking example of the essential weakness in the diplomacy of the Second Empire. Napoleon himself negotiated directly with foreign Ministers and ambassadors, a practice which Louis XIV. had been very careful to avoid, in order always to leave his agents a line of retreat, and which even Napoleon I. had considered unwise. It is true that William I.'s policy, too, was one of personal authority; but at least the Prussian Monarch never negotiated behind his Minister's back and in opposition to his opinions. When Bismarck disagreed with his King, his first care was to convert William to his point of view, either by persuasion or by threatening to resign.

Immediately after this crisis Napoleon made the situation public in a circular signed by La Valette, who was temporarily acting as Minister for Foreign Affairs. "The growth of Prussia insures the independence of Germany. France should take no umbrage at it. When once Germany's national sentiment is satisfied, her various hostilities will cease. A more accurate demarcation of frontiers, by rendering Europe more homogeneous, will guarantee the peace of the Continent. An irresistible Power—need we regret it?—is forcing peoples to unite together in great agglomerations and causing secondary States to disappear. Perhaps it is inspired by a sort of providential prevision of the world's future destiny. . . ." It was thus that this monarch transformed the principle of nationalities into the theory of "great agglomerations." All the efforts of the Monarchy had been directed towards the disintegration of Germany: all the efforts of the Empire tended to unify her. Some time afterwards, in his speech from the throne, Napoleon III. quoted the very words used by his uncle at St. Helena. Napoleon III. has often been called a dreamer. A dreamer he may have been, but he was one with an *idée fixe*.

After playing Bismarck's game in the name of the principle of nationalities, he continued to do so by violating that principle himself. In trying to redeem his faults he made them worse. To compensate for the Prussian annexations he asked for the left bank of the Rhine, as far as Mainz. It was too late: Bismarck refused to comply. Then Napoleon, since he could obtain no German territory, fell back upon Belgium and Luxemburg. Bismarck, with the example of Frederick in his mind, begged the French Ambassador, Benedetti, to make his request in writing; and the document was useful to him later on in securing the neutrality of England, who was disturbed by our covetous designs on the shores of the North Sea. Finally, after passing from one concession to another, the Emperor ended by confining his ambitions to Luxemburg—and even here he was outwitted by his terrible adversary.

During these sad years the death of the Emperor Maxi-

milian put a tragic end to the Mexican expedition. Marshal Niel, the Minister of War, was obstinately opposed in his schemes of military organisation, both by the Legislative Assembly and the public at large. Various men of light and leading said: "Put an end to the army, and you put an end to war." In all ages there have been those who thought that war could be avoided by making no preparations for it, and extended to the army, the instrument of war, the hatred they felt for war itself. In spite of the warnings of Rothan, Stoffel and Ducrot; in spite, too, of the fact that King William and his Minister, disregarding the Chamber, were considerably enlarging the Prussian Army, the Imperial Government proposed to reduce our forces.

As regards the rest of Europe, England professed to be indifferent to Continental matters, and Russia was alienated from us by the Crimean War and the affairs of Poland. The only two alliances that remained open to us were with Austria and Italy. Since 1867 there had been conversations and correspondences with Vienna and Florence, but no precise agreement or definite compact had resulted. Between France and Italy was Rome, which Victor Emmanuel coveted, but which Napoleon, false to his favourite principle, would not give up. Austria, before committing herself, wished to finish her military preparations and watch the course of events.

On July 3, 1870, Paris received the news that Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern had ascended the throne of Spain. This was a re-constitution of the Empire of Charles V. for the benefit of Prussia. In the case of a European war France would have no security on her Pyrenean frontier. The French Government protested. On July 12, on the advice of the Czar, Alexander II., the candidate retired. The incident was apparently closed, to the benefit of France and of the cause of peace, when a secret meeting was held at Saint-Cloud, with neither Émile Ollivier nor any other Minister present, except the Duc de Gramont, Minister for Foreign Affairs. As the result of this meeting Gramont addressed a despatch to the French Ambassador in Prussia, Benedetti,

demanding an assurance from the King of Prussia that he would not again authorise Leopold's candidature. (July 12.)

On the following day, at Ems, an aide-de-camp came from the King to inform Benedetti that Prince Leopold had renounced the throne of Spain, and that His Majesty regarded the incident as completely closed. The Ambassador demanded another audience. The aide-de-camp returned with the King's assurance that he approved of Prince Leopold's renunciation; as for promises regarding the future, His Majesty could only repeat his previous statements. Benedetti still insisted. The answer came: it was a refusal—not discourteous, but quite definite. The King had said his last word in the morning, and regretted that he could add nothing.

At this moment Bismarck appears upon the scene. The telegram relating these facts reached him in Berlin. Moltke and Roon were dining with him. The tragic scene is familiar to us: those who took part in it never forgot its overwhelming effect. They deciphered the message, which indicated strained, but not ruptured relations, and left a loophole for peace. Even the chance of such a prospect filled the Minister and generals with consternation. "My guests," wrote Bismarck afterwards, "were so crushed that they forgot to eat and drink."

And then, according to his own confession, he committed the action that will blacken his memory more and more as the world advances in wisdom and morality. By a flagrant suppression of facts he gave, to a telegram that was merely a diplomatic announcement, the character of a call to arms. "I neither added nor expunged anything," he wrote cynically, "but I suppressed a few things." He sent this spurious document to the Press, representing the King's answer, by which no slight was intended, as an insult to the French Ambassador. He sent telegrams to the same effect to all our embassies. "It will act down there on the Gallic bull," he said to his guests, "like a red rag." The three men returned to the dinner-table. They suddenly recovered their zest for food and drink, and the conversation was quite

gay, even Moltke, usually so self-contained, becoming expansive and garrulous. "If it be granted me," he cried, "to live to command our army in such a war as that, my old carcass may go to the devil as soon as it's over!"

Meanwhile Benedetti, after paying his court to the King at the station at Ems, and telegraphing the story to his own Minister, arrived in Paris. The Government therefore heard the truth from him, as he told it afterwards in his book on his mission in Prussia, and as the Duc de Gramont confirmed it in 1871 before the Committee of Inquiry appointed by the National Assembly.

On the 13th England had pointed out to the Imperial Government that it was assuming a heavy responsibility in failing to declare itself satisfied by Prince Leopold's renunciation.

Such was the state of affairs when the matter came before the Corps Législatif.

PART II

THE WAR

(1870–1871)

CHAPTER IV

NATIONAL DEFENCE

The Declaration of War—Gambetta believes in Victory for France—First Defeats—The 4th September—The Government of National Defence—Gambetta becomes Minister of the Interior—The Tours Delegation (September 8th–October 9th).

On July 15 the sitting of the Legislative Assembly opened at one o'clock. The Government briefly described the recent negotiations, and announced that, having made every effort to avoid war, it would now prepare for it, leaving the responsibility to Prussia. Thiers, amid tumult and invective, made his protest: "Remember May 6, 1866. You silenced me when I pointed out to you the dangers that were imminent. That memory, if nothing else, should make you listen to me now." Gambetta intervened. "You are making the whole of this grave, this terrible question hang upon a telegram sent without your knowledge to all the Cabinets of Europe. I maintain that you should lay before the Chamber no mere extracts or allusions, but some direct and authentic communication. It is a question of honour, you say; well, we must know in what terms they have dared to speak of France." Jules Favre demanded the publication of the despatches, and especially of the one in which the Prussian Government informed the foreign Governments of its resolve. Buffet supported the motion, but it was defeated by 153 votes to 84.

The sitting was resumed at half-past nine that evening. Talhouët, Recorder of the Committee that examined the legislative measures proposed by the Government, read his statement. Later on, he sadly acknowledged its mistakes.

Gambetta entered the tribune. His speech shows his peculiar position in the party of the Left. On the one hand —with the majority—he supported the vote of credit for the army, from motives of patriotism, though ten members of the Left, including Favre and Grévy, voted against it, and seven abstained from voting. On the other, he maintained that the Imperial Government was false to its policy of 1864 and 1866; he demanded reasons for so great a change, and asserted that even if the progress of Prussia had made this necessary there was no need to resort to "wretched make-shifts." "For my part I was expecting that, when eighty-four members of this Assembly had demanded the production of the document on which you ground the whole *casus belli*, you would communicate it directly, fully, and in its integrity to the Committee. You call upon France to give you men and money, you plunge her into a war which will mean, perhaps, that the end of the nineteenth century will be devoted to settling the question of supremacy between the German and French races, yet you will not make an authentic, definite statement of the origin of this immense enterprise, so that France and all Europe may know which side perpetrated the unjust outrage and which side is making a legitimate defence. In this discussion I am concerned with one thing only, which should be as interesting to you as it is absorbing to me: to find out whether the decisions that you are trying to make final will win the assent of Europe and more especially of France. Well, when you have drawn the sword it will only be on one condition that you can count on the needful sympathy, the indispensable support of Europe: your explanations must prove that you have suffered a profound and real outrage. Now, I am as sensitive as any man, and speaking for myself, if the choice had been left to me by the Government of my own party, I beg you to believe that I should not have resorted to such wretched makeshifts to find decisive reasons for such conduct. I am not suspect therefore, and I beg you to listen to me when I say that you have given no adequate satisfaction to the public in the quotations and documents that you have produced." Finally

he stated that the Ems telegram, which in the eyes of the Government was the cause of the quarrel, had been sent with Benedetti's knowledge and had given him no uneasiness, and that the French Ambassador had not uttered a word of protest against the attitude of the Prussian Government.

It is plain that what he condemns is not so much the rupture with the policy of 1864 and 1866, as the manner of its accomplishment. He was, at heart, quite convinced that the policy of 1866 could not be maintained, that it was high time to put a stop to the encroachments of Prussia, and indeed that this should have been done sooner. In a letter to his father from Ems, dated July 25, 1869, he spoke of "the hatred he had vowed to the victors of Sadowa." He knew that sooner or later the struggle must come, but he wished the motive to be irreproachable, the outrage undeniable, and the action of France clearly proved to be just, in the eyes of the world.

A Bonapartist Deputy congratulated him publicly on voting for the Army supplies. "There is no need to congratulate me," answered Gambetta (and his words were published at once); "I could not hesitate. It will be all the better for your Emperor if he can wash away December 2 in the waters of the Rhine, and can profit by his victory, which I desire with all my heart. The Republic will profit by it later on."

Émile Ollivier, in his book on the Liberal Empire, which abounds in interesting remarks, says that at a meeting in the Rue de la Sourdière Gambetta used very "bellicose" language. We have seen what this amounted to. The truth is that Buette—at that time a member of his *comité*—and others of his friends thought that he was going too far. Gambetta was much nearer to the Republicans of the Restoration and the July Monarchy, who dreamt of restoring the military greatness of France and the frontiers of the First Republic, than to his own party in the Legislative Assembly, who thought the profession of arms incompatible with democracy, and feared that in strengthening the army they would strengthen the Empire. They did not believe in the German menace. It was of this that Jules Ferry was thinking, when

examining his conscience later on, as he spoke of "those dangerous and deceptive Utopias"; and we know of Michelet's noble remorse after the disaster. Always, generation after generation, we see the same eternal mistake. The humanitarians and cosmopolitans of 1790 became, the moment their country was invaded, the ferocious patriots of 1792 and 1793. But the mistake was less excusable in 1868 and 1869; in the first place because the past should have served as an object-lesson, and also because the foreign policy of the Republican Democracy was founded on the principle of Nationalities and was therefore inconsistent with its military policy. To aim at the remodelling of Europe and then oppose the first steps necessary to the scheme was too glaring a contradiction. Gambetta was keenly alive to this situation. In the preceding year, when Marshal Niel's projects were under discussion, Lavertujon had published in the *Gironde* some rather trenchant articles criticising the attitude of the Left, and Jules Simon had been stung into complaining "I have just read your article on military law: I think you sacrifice us a little to your own reputation as a politician. As for me, I am not afraid of being called a Utopian. You know there is one of our reasons that we shall not give: namely, that a standing army is an instrument of Cæsarism." Jules Favre spoke in the same sense: "A concern for military affairs points to schemes hatched in the interests of the dynasty." Now it was these very articles that led Gambetta to pay a visit of congratulation to Lavertujon, to make a friend of him, and support him in the election of 1869.

We see, then, that there were many points of difference between Gambetta and the Left party as a whole. He did not share the opinions of his Republican colleagues with regard to Prussia, or Sadowa, or the Army. Nor did he share their views on the organisation of the State. In their wish to abolish the Empire, they would also have destroyed the State on which the Empire was founded. The State, like the Army was confused in their thoughts with the Imperial régime whose downfall they desired. He, on the contrary, whose mind was saturated with Mirabeau and Comte, identified the

State with the Democracy. The State, he said, is ourselves; universal suffrage means ourselves; authority means ourselves, in virtue of the nation's sovereignty. Authority must be strong, then, since it speaks in the name of the nation; the State must be powerful and active, since it is the mainspring of the people's progress. This idea never left him, and later on, long after the fall of the Empire, it created serious trouble between him and a section of the Republican party. So we see, even when he first entered the Chamber at the age of thirty-one, how independent was his character, how original his mind.

On July 19 came the declaration of war. On the 24th the session of the Chambers closed, and Gambetta set out for Switzerland with Lavertujon. The final goal of their journey was the Château des Crêtes, near Clarens, but they first travelled about Switzerland in easy stages. Not for one moment did he doubt of victory. Whenever his companion allowed any feelings of uneasiness to become apparent he would cry, gaily and confidently: "We shall beat them!" The despatch from Wissembourg on August 5 left him calm. Then news of Reichshoffen and Forbach reached them. "We must pack," said he, and returned to Paris; but he gave no sign of anxiety.

On August 8 the Chambers were convoked. The Legislative Assembly met on the 9th. In the name of the Left Jules Favre proposed that a committee of fifteen members should be appointed, with full powers to save the country from invasion. Clément Duvernois moved the following order of the day: "The Chamber, having resolved to support a Cabinet that is capable of organising the country's defences, passed to the order of the day." Émile Ollivier announced that the Cabinet did not accept it. The members of the Chamber passed it without leaving their places, and the Cabinet at once resigned. Then the Chamber rejected, by 190 votes to 53, the appointment of a Defence Committee. "You will come to it yet!" cried Gambetta. And Jules Favre added: "By the time you come to it, it will be too late!"

The question was raised again on the 13th. "We must

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know," said Gambetta, "whether we have made our final choice between saving our country and saving a dynasty." In a secret Committee of the whole Chamber the new President of the Council, General de Palikao, opposed Jules Favre's motion, which was rejected. If, at that time, the Corps Législatif had appointed the Defence Committee demanded by Jules Favre, Thiers and Gambetta, that "most imprudent and least strategical" march which, as Napoleon III. himself admitted in his letter of October 29, 1870, to Sir John Burgoyne, was prompted by "political considerations"—namely, the march on Sedan from Châlons—would certainly never have taken place.

The next day Gambetta appeared in the tribune with a newspaper from Nancy called *L'Espérance du Peuple*, which contained the news that, on the 12th, four Prussian soldiers had taken possession of that town. Sorrow wrung from him the cry: "Our protectors are useless!" A few days later he read aloud an article from the *Progrès de la Marne* announcing that five Prussian horsemen had occupied Châlons.

By August 22 the Empire had practically ceased to exist. Lord Lyons wrote to his Government: "I do not know if the news of a victory would save the dynasty." The members of the Left believed that the Empire was lost, but were in no mind to see the Republic inheriting its troubles. They hoped that the Chamber would avoid revolution by taking the reins into its own hands and forming a Government for the duration of the war, even if they themselves should have no place in it. Thiers and General Trochu were regarded as probable leaders; and later, when the war was over, a Constituent Assembly could institute a Republic. It was the most ardent wish of the Republicans that there should be no disorder, that the law should be respected. When, on August 9, some rioters scaled the garden-wall of the Corps Législatif at the corner of the Rue de Bourgogne, Jules Ferry's determined attitude made them retire: and when, on the 14th, some of Blanqui's followers tried to seize the firemen's barracks at La Villette and to steal their muskets, with the result that

several men were killed, Gambetta from the rostrum scourged those who made civil war in the face of the enemy, and demanded an inquiry. There was nothing that the Left dreaded so much as riots in the streets, which, while aggravating the troubles of the country before the eyes of the world, would have further compromised the Republican cause in the future. But the official majority and Palikao's Ministry dared not subscribe to the election of a Government by the Chamber, which would have meant the recognition of the Empire's collapse. Their evasions and delays brought about what they most feared: a revolution.

Meanwhile Gambetta and his friends were vainly clamouring to be told something of the military situation, and of the defences of Paris. It was known that the Metz Army was engaged; the battles of Gravelotte, Rezonville and Mars-la-Tour had been fought in the middle of August; but the Minister of War did not dare to give definite information. It was known, too, that MacMahon's Army was marching away from Paris, but its movements were not published, and the sense of torture grew day by day, since every day's delay was a fresh chance of disaster.

At last, on September 3, came the news of the catastrophe at Sedan. At four o'clock a telegram from the Emperor to the Empress confirmed the fact of the capitulation. The Council of Ministers published a proclamation; numbers of Deputies hastened to the Palais Bourbon to demand a night sitting. Opposite the Pont de la Concorde Gambetta addressed the crowd, begging them to retire and leave the Assembly to discuss the situation undisturbed. The sitting opened at one o'clock in the morning. General de Palikao, amid profound silence, announced that the Army had capitulated and that the Emperor was a prisoner. Jules Favre, representing the Left, proposed a motion to the effect that Louis Napoleon Bonaparte and his dynasty were deposed and that a Defence Committee should be nominated. Instead of settling the question at once the Chamber adjourned at noon.

When the sitting opened on the 4th, General de Palikao brought forward a measure appointing a Committee of

Regency and National Defence, and Thiers moved a resolution signed by forty-seven Deputies of all parties: "The Chamber appoints a Committee of Government and of National Defence. A Constituent Assembly will be elected as soon as circumstances permit." The three motions were sent to the bureaux, and the sitting was suspended, only to be resumed at two o'clock.

Meanwhile the crowd that had been gathering in the approaches to the building since noon was swelling minute by minute. At last the grille yielded to the pressure, and the Strangers' Gallery was invaded.

Most of the Deputies of the Left took their seats, and Gambetta, urged by several of his colleagues, entered the tribune and spoke to the public in the Strangers' Gallery: "The first condition of the people's emancipation," he said, "is order; and I know you are resolved to respect it. You desire to give an energetic expression of your wishes; your wish is in the depths of every Frenchman's heart, it is on the lips of your representatives, it is the subject of their discussion: to depose——"

"Yes!" cried many voices from the Strangers' Gallery; and several added:

"Deposition, and the Republic!"

"What I am asking of you," continued Gambetta, "is that you should feel, as I do, the intense gravity of the situation, and should forbear to disturb us with your cries, even if they be cries of applause——"

He was interrupted by prolonged shouting. "We want a Republic! *Vive la République!*"

"Pray be calm!" said Gambetta. "Order must be observed. We are the representatives of the nation's sovereignty. I beg you to respect that title, which we hold from the people. It is incumbent on the men who occupy these benches to recognise that the power which has brought upon the country all these deplorable evils has fallen; but it is equally incumbent upon you to see that the declaration which will shortly be made should not appear to be made under the pressure of violence. We have two things to do: first, to

resume our sitting and act in accordance with the authorised forms; and secondly to give the country an example of real union. In the name of our country and of political liberty—two things which will never be separated in my mind—I call upon you to remain calm while your representatives return to their seats."

The calm, however, was short-lived. At half-past two President Schneider entered and took the chair. The Strangers' Gallery was packed with a constantly increasing crowd, and the tumult became greater than ever. The butt-ends of muskets battered loudly on the entrance-door of the Pas-Perdus; panels burst in noisily, and there were crashes of broken glass. Crémieux tried to speak, but his voice was drowned in the uproar. Gambetta again appealed for order and silence: "There is a solemn pledge that you must give us: you must allow the deliberations that are about to take place to proceed in perfect freedom."

President Schneider then added his entreaties: "M. Gambetta," he said, "whom none of you can suspect, and whom I for my part regard as one of the most patriotic men in the country, has just appealed to you in the name of that country's interests. Believe me, at this moment the Chamber is called upon to discuss a situation of the greatest gravity. It can only be done in a spirit appropriate to the needs of that situation; if it were otherwise M. Gambetta would not have begged you to give us support by your conduct."

Sounds of approbation mingled with complaints came from the gallery.

"And I count upon it, citizens!" cried Gambetta.

President Schneider continued: "Like M. Gambetta, I cannot express to you too strongly that there is no true liberty that is not accompanied by order——"

Still the excitement grew. Gambetta made a last effort to preserve legal forms: "It is necessary that all the Deputies now in the lobbies, or in the committee-rooms where they have been discussing the Emperor's deposition, should return to their benches and take their places before the measure can

be passed. And you also, citizens, must wait in seemly and dignified calmness while your representatives enter the hall and take their seats. They are being summoned. I beg you to preserve a solemn silence till they return—— "

At that moment—it was three o'clock—the door above the semi-circle, opposite to the tribune, was burst open and the crowd swarmed into the Deputies' benches.

" Since discussion is impossible under these conditions," said the President, " I close the sitting."

An uproarious and excited crowd invaded the semi-circle, the steps of the tribune, and the President's chair. Gambetta forced his way through it, and cried from the tribune: " Come, come, citizens, the precincts must be treated with respect! Be calm! In less than a quarter of an hour the Act of Deposition will be passed and made public. Come—leave us! Have you no confidence in your representatives? " ——" Yes, yes, we have confidence in you! "——" Well, then, leave us when I ask you, and rest assured that we are going to pass the Act of Deposition! "

" And what about the Republic? "

A scene of wild confusion followed, during which he left the tribune and spoke to some of his colleagues of the Left. Then, again entering the tribune, he said:

" Listen, citizens! Since the country is in danger, since sufficient time has been given to the representatives of the nation to pass an Act of Deposition, since we constitute to-day the authority sanctioned by universal suffrage, we declare that Louis Napoleon Bonaparte and his dynasty have for ever ceased to reign over France."

This announcement was greeted with prolonged cheers; but demands for a Republic continued none the less.

" Do you or do you not," cried Jules Favre, " wish for civil war? "

" No, no! Not civil war, but war against the Prussians! "

" Then," said Favre, " we must immediately form a Provisional Government. . . . I entreat you, do not let us have any bloodshed: do not force brave French soldiers to turn their arms against you! Their arms should only be used

against the foreigner. Let us all be united in a single thought, the thought of patriotism and democracy!"

"*Vive la République!*" cried the people.

"This is not the right place for proclaiming a Republic!"

"Yes, yes! *Vive la République!*"

"Yes!" agreed Gambetta. "*Vive la République!* Citizens, let us go and proclaim it at the Hôtel de Ville!"

Surrounded by countless hordes they set out to the Hôtel de Ville: Jules Favre and Jules Ferry by the right bank of the river, and Gambetta, Ernest Picard, Pelletan and Glais-Bizoin by the left bank. In the radiant sunshine the town wore a festal air. It seemed to the people that since they were saved from the Empire they were also saved from the Prussians. They hoped that the country would soon find new troops, and new opportunities for saving everything. No weapons were to be seen, no blood was shed, no resistance was made. The movement was the work of circumstances rather than of men. A tidal wave, it seemed, had swept away the remnants of the Empire; and the Republic appeared like an impersonal Government that commanded the support of all because all had but one task. The Empire, as it fell, handed France over to the Republic.

In a letter that has often been quoted Gambetta described this famous day, four years later, to Mme. Adam: "The memories of this tragic anniversary always clothe my soul in mourning. In spite of the deliverance that marked the day, I cannot chase away the cruel thought that we did not overthrow the Empire with our own hands, but watched it sinking under the blows of a foreign foe. I can remember, with all the bitterness of that first day, that as I walked to the Hôtel de Ville along the quays of the Seine, with the people of Paris shouting and cheering round me, I said to the man who was beside me: 'The cheers and raptures of these people make me so sad that I could die! The poor souls do not hear the tramp of the German armies in the distance!' I hated the glorious sunshine, which seemed to be illuminating, as though for a last holiday, the fall of a great people. France was rushing towards the abyss in perfect unconsciousness."

These were words written after the event, under the burden of defeat. At the time, his imperturbable optimism had by no means forsaken him. When, on hearing of the defeat at Sedan, Lavertujon had cried: "This time we have reached the bottom of the abyss!" Gambetta broke in with: "Don't talk such nonsense!"

They reached the Hôtel de Ville at about four o'clock, and found that Millière, a leader of the Revolutionary party, who had hastily returned from the Legislative Assembly, was already there with his followers. He had quickly drawn up lists of members for a Provisional Government, and was throwing them to the people from the windows: they bore the names of Blanqui, Delescluze, Flourens, Félix Pyat and Rochefort, with those of Jules Favre and Gambetta. A voice cried: "The Deputies for Paris must be members of the Government!" Upon this such an outburst of acclamation followed that all competition was impossible. The Government therefore included all the Deputies for Paris except Thiers, who had refused office beforehand. Gambetta, Ernest Picard and Jules Simon were regarded as Deputies for Paris, though they had chosen to represent the Bouches-du-Rhône, L'Hérault and the Gironde.

But the revolutionaries were on the alert. They must win the army, and to win the army they must have the support of the Governor of Paris, General Trochu. Civil war was on the horizon, and this danger decided him to accept the presidency of the Provisional Government.

Jules Favre was made Vice-President, and Minister for Foreign Affairs; Gambetta received the portfolio of the Interior, being elected to the post in opposition to Ernest Picard, who went to the Ministry of Finance. Crémieux became Minister of Justice, Le Flô Minister of War, Fourichon Minister of Marine, Jules Simon Minister of Public Instruction and Ecclesiastical Affairs, Dorian received the portfolio of Public Works, and Magnin that of Commerce.

On September 5 the Government thus addressed the army: "We are not the Government of a party: we are a Government of National Defence. We have but one aim and one

desire: the salvation of our country by the army and the nation, rallied round that glorious symbol before which Europe fled eighty years ago. To-day, as then, the Republic stands for the close union of army and people, in the defence of our country."

Three days later the Government of the Defence prepared to appeal to the country. "It must be irrefutably proved before the eyes of Europe that the whole country is with us. The invader must find his advance checked, not only by an immense city that is determined to perish rather than yield, but also by an entire people—alert, organised and governing through their representatives—by an Assembly, in short, that can keep the country's heart alive everywhere and despite all disasters." The Government then convoked the electoral assemblies for October 16, to elect *au scrutin de liste*[1] a "Constituent Assembly" of 750 members.

At this moment MacMahon's Army was imprisoned in Germany, while Bazaine's was surrounded in Metz, and General Vinoy was returning to Paris with fifteen or twenty thousand men. To oppose 700,000 Germans we had 94,000 regular troops, 49,000 sailors, 13,000 marine infantry and artillery, and 34,000 gendarmes, custom-house officials and foresters. The Corps Législatif had, as a matter of fact, ordered a general mobilisation; but the cadres were incomplete, there was a lack of generals, and arms were very scarce. Our most important supplies were in Strasburg and Metz. The Prussians were marching on Paris; and it was believed that the capital contained only enough food for forty-five days. The enemy was counting on a riot.

It was to the interest of the Government to hasten the election, for the sooner it took place the more Republican would its result be; and moreover it gave the Ministry an opportunity of escaping the dangers into which the necessity of saving the country had plunged them.

On September 15 they decreed the number of deputies to be elected by each department, and on the following day

[1] That is, a ballot in which the elector votes for all the deputies or senators of a department.—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

fixed the elections of the municipal councils for September 25 and changed the date of the legislative elections to October 2.

In the meantime they were seeking to establish a delegation in the provinces, to represent them and act for them during the siege. On September 9 they all agreed that the town should be Tours; but the selecting of the men was a harder matter, since not one would consent to go.

It has often been repeated that at this time Gambetta insisted on the danger of keeping the Government in Paris. Later on he himself, when giving evidence before the Committee of Inquiry of the National Assembly, on November 13, 1872, referred to the subject in these words: "From the very beginning I declared that the whole Government ought to leave Paris. It seemed to me incomprehensible that a town that was about to be besieged and blockaded, and consequently reduced to a purely military and strategical *rôle*, should continue to be the seat of Government. Among all the weaknesses possible in the circumstances, that was the most fatal; affairs would have turned out quite differently if the Government, instead of being blockaded, had been outside." It was indeed a mistake of the first importance to leave the Government in Paris; but that this was not so obvious at first can easily be deduced from the notes taken day by day during the sittings of the Council, by Dréo, secretary to the Government of National Defence.

On September 7 and 9 the Council decided that "the head of the Government" should remain in Paris, but should send some of the members to the provinces with the title of delegates; and on the 9th, that Crémieux should go to Tours but that the Ministers for Foreign Affairs should not. On the evening of the same day Gambetta described the gravity of the situation in Lyons, and the theories of over-decentralisation that were winning their way in several of the large towns. He expressed the opinion that, if dismemberment were to be avoided, an energetic Government must be established outside Paris. There was some discussion on the number of members to be sent as delegates to Tours. Favre, Rochefort and Glais-Bizoin advised that two members should

accompany Crémieux, but in the end he was sent alone. On the 13th Gambetta wrote to Magnin: "I beseech you to render an inestimable service to your country and our cause. I cannot myself go to Tours; my presence in Paris is considered indispensable, and I think that view is not without foundation. Nothing less than a prevailing belief to that effect could have prevented me from going; but you will understand how indispensable it is for me, therefore, to have at the head of my department a man who is safe, well known, popular in the province, and absolutely worthy of my confidence. You are the very man. Consent to go to Tours, I implore you."

On the 15th he again referred to the tendency in some of the departments to form themselves into independent groups, and urged that a "real," strong Government should be set up at Tours. Garnier-Pagès suggested that Crémieux should be supported by four other members; but Jules Simon, Jules Favre, Glais-Bizoin and Gambetta thought three delegates would be enough, provided they were well-known and influential. The same evening Jules Favre's insistence on the need for reinforcing Crémieux resulted in the appointment of Glais-Bizoin and Admiral Fourichon, who was Minister of Marine and at the same time Minister of War for the departments. This rough sketch of a Government—so to speak—seemed sufficient, because the convocation of the Constituent Assembly was expected at an early date, and no one foresaw a long siege.

In the middle of September, then, there was no question of transferring the seat of Government to the provinces: the Council was chiefly concerned with the political situation in certain departments, and the friction between the civil and military authorities. Gambetta thought it was his duty to remain in Paris. It was only when he was at Tours, two months later, that he recognised the full danger of this situation from the point of view of national defence, and insisted upon it to the besieged Government in his despatch of November 9. But by that time it was too late.

Hardly had they arrived at Tours before the delegates saw

the impracticability of calling an election. The whole of Eastern France was occupied by the Prussians, while in the rest of the country most of the electors were on active service. Moreover it would involve breaking, in the face of the enemy, the truce between the different parties. On September 18 Crémieux wrote to Gambetta opposing "this terrible domestic conflict." Gambetta insisted, however, on keeping to the whole programme—first the municipal elections, and then the political elections. It was of the first importance, he maintained, to legalise the revolution of September 4, to remove every pretext for the hostility and the schemes of the provinces, "to have no appearance of forgetting in power the principles professed in opposition"—this was written on September 17—"and to show Europe that the Republic has the sanction of the nation." The delegates were obliged to give way, and convoked the electors.

But Bismarck put an end to these projects. Already, on September 13, he had sent a circular to the diplomatic agents of Prussia, laying down as a condition of peace "the pushing back of the German frontier so as to give Germany, as defensive ramparts, the fortresses that enabled France to menace her." On September 20, at Ferrières, he demanded Alsace and Lorraine of Jules Favre, and also, as the preliminary condition of an armistice for the forming of a Constituent Assembly, the surrender of Strasburg, Pfalzburg and Toul, and the occupation of Mount Valérien. That is to say, the Assembly was to carry on its deliberations at the cannon's mouth. On such terms as these, it was impossible to convoke the Assembly. Later on, when General Trochu related these facts to the National Assembly, on June 2, 1871, he ended with these words: "The Government of the Defence made a great effort to give the country, in its agony, the support of an Assembly. Had not the Prussian Chancellor introduced dishonour between us and that Assembly, it would have assumed the direction of the country's affairs."

The Government, then, was forced to adjourn the elections. "Dates will be fixed anew," it said, on September 23, "as soon as circumstances allow." And Gambetta telegraphed to

the prefects: "Publish, in all the communes of France, a brief report of Favre's interview with Bismarck . . . Paris is maddened, and swears to resist *à outrance*. The departments must be roused!"

The whole of France, indeed, was enraged by the outrage. Never, since the Treaty of Brétigny, had she heard such insulting language. From every corner of the country came the same cry of protest. All parties, the "blue" and the "white" alike, had flocked to the tricolor even before Bismarck's insolent demands were published. Already Cathelineau had raised his volunteers in the West, and Charette had hastened from Rome with his Pontifical Zouaves. Here was no war of La Vendée! There was no repetition, now, of the melancholy scenes of 1814! At the end of this September of 1870 France sprang to arms as one man, shaking with anger: not a man in the whole country would have dared to speak of peace, not one! The Comte de Chambord wrote: "At all costs the honour and the territory of France must be kept intact." Napoleon III., from his captivity at Wilhelmshöhe, wrote: "What Government could demand such conditions, and then hope to live on any kind of terms with a nation that had been so outraged? France would never resign herself to such a humiliation." Guizot declared for war *à outrance*, and opposed the idea of surrendering Alsace and Lorraine before showing France, and the world that everything possible had been done to save them. The Prince de Joinville sought active service, and the Duc de Chartres joined the forces under the name of Robert Le Fort. Taine spoke in no uncertain tones. "If there be men who are French in heart and desire," he wrote, "they are the compatriots of Kléber and Uhrich. To demand that they should be torn from their country, should be made the subjects of another, and should enter Prussian regiments, to fire on the French, perhaps, later on, is a most enormous injustice. . . . To impose such a sacrifice upon France is to demand of a mother the surrender of one of her children: it is contrary to Nature and to morality. The lips that should stammer such a compact under the constraint of force would

retract it in a whisper, and would vow that such a criminal promise should never be sealed with a still more criminal resignation. . . . On this subject the voice of history—in default of feeling—speaks loudly enough: our enemies have only to consult their memories of 1807 and 1813 to learn that the oppression they suffered produced their retaliation, and that the fruits of Wagram and Jena were Leipzig and Waterloo."

For every Frenchman, then, the continuation of the war at that time was a matter of plain duty. There was not a man, whatever his past, his party, or his beliefs, who hesitated. It was a moment of magnificent unanimity on a point of honour.

Meanwhile, at Tours, there was no real leader. The delegates were assisted by a consulting committee composed of representatives of each of the Ministerial departments. The Ministry of the Interior was represented by Clément Laurier, with Durangel and Jules Cazot under him; the Ministry of Finance by Roussy; Foreign Affairs by the Comte de Chaudordy; Public Instruction by Silvy; Public Works by Franqueville, and Commerce by Dumoustier de Frédilly. The delegates often sought the opinion, also, of Steenackers, Director-General of Telegraphic Communications, and of Jules Lecesne, President of the Committee of Armament.

It would be unjust to ignore the good work achieved by the delegates and their colleagues before Gambetta's arrival. He himself fully recognised it. Admiral Fourichon restored the discipline that was so much shaken. Colonel Thoumas began the reorganisation of the artillery. Through the delegates' efforts a fund of fifty millions was placed at the disposal of the Committee of Armament, which had been formed in Paris on September 9 and had immediately put itself into communication with all parts of the world where arms were manufactured. At Tours the Delegation had found General Lefort, who, in the capacity of Under-Secretary in the Ministry of War, had been deputed to form a relieving army on the Loire. With a naval brigade, some reserves from Africa, a corps of militia, and the remnant of Sedan, the nucleus of an army was created in a few days.

On October 2 Admiral Fourichon, owing to a disagreement with his two colleagues, resigned his post as delegate of the Ministry of War, while remaining Minister of Marine. General Lefort was selected as Admiral Fourichon's successor, but his health obliged him to decline the post, and the Ministry of War was left with no real head. A variety of substitutes were suggested, among them a managing committee of five members; but this was never actually formed.

It was on September 19 that Paris was invested. During the two preceding days the Diplomatic Corps had left the capital for Tours. On the 21st Gambetta issued a proclamation that breathed something of the spirit of Danton. "On this day, seventy-eight years ago, our fathers founded the Republic, and—while the foreign invader was profaning the sacred soil of their country—vowed to live free or to die fighting. They kept their vow; they defeated the foreigner; and the Republic of 1792 lives in the memory of men as the symbol of heroism and national greatness. . . . May the spirit of power that inspired our forefathers breathe into our own souls, and we, too, shall conquer! . . ."

CHAPTER V

GAMBETTA AT TOURS

Gambetta leaves Paris in a Balloon—How he became Minister of War—Gambetta and Freycinet at the Ministry of War.

During the night of September 27 the Prussians destroyed the cable that passed under the Seine, with the result that communications were cut off between Paris and Tours. And hour by hour bad news was arriving from other quarters: the fall of Toulon on the 23rd, the fall of Strasbourg on the 28th, the invasion of Orléanais, the threat of danger to Tours itself, trouble in the Ligue du Midi, increasing friction between prefects and generals. These things gave the delegates a sense of helplessness, and having, only a fortnight earlier, declared an election to be impossible, they now regarded it as a necessity. "We must have some kind of support," said Crémieux, "and nothing but an Assembly can give it to us." Laurier was of the same opinion. "Remember," he said on October 3, "that the greatest achievement of our national history was the work of the Convention. Give us some similar support, for without it we can do nothing, either at home or abroad." The Delegation convoked the electoral meetings for October 16, and informed the Government in Paris of their action, by means of carrier pigeons. This change of front, which revealed their vacillating and uneasy condition, made a bad impression in Paris. The objections previously insisted on by the delegates themselves, the practical impossibilities arising from the invasion of the country and the demands of the war, were far more marked than before, while Bismarck's claims at Ferrières and the excitement they had aroused, left

no choice but to continue the struggle *à outrance*. On October 1 the Government in Paris passed this decree: "Since the new decision of the Delegation can only be the result of a misapprehension . . . since it is physically impossible that it should be carried out in twenty-three of the departments, and since it must of necessity be incompletely enforced in the others, it is decreed that the adjournment of the elections should remain in force until such time as they can be held in all parts of the Republic."

There then arose a question of sending another member of the Government to Tours, and Gambetta was suggested by several of his colleagues. He refused to go. "He regarded Paris as the post of the greatest danger and therefore of the greatest honour," says Jules Simon in his *Souvenirs du Quatre-Septembre;* it seemed to him that, being young, he ought to be nearer to the enemy. For a long time he resisted his colleagues' wishes." The whole of the 3rd was occupied in discussions, yet nothing definite was settled. Jules Favre and Gambetta persisted in their refusal. The matter was then put to the vote, and the choice falling on Gambetta, he declared himself ready to submit. After a long discussion, his powers were thus defined: "M. Gambetta's instructions are to express and carry out the wishes of the Government. He will strive to maintain the unity of action that is essential to success. He will consult with his colleagues, and will have a casting vote. In concert with them he will enforce the execution of the decree by which the elections to the Constituent Assembly are adjourned until the conditions of the war shall make it possible to consult the country. As Minister of the Interior he is invested with full powers to recruit, assemble, and arm all the national forces which it may be necessary to raise for the defence of the country. In all matters concerning the organisation and movements of the army, the decisions of the Delegation shall be executed by the Minister of War and Marine."

Gambetta had no illusions with regard to the almost insurmountable difficulties that lay before him, but he did not despair of overcoming them. He had not sought the power

that was thrust upon him; but his whole soul was filled with the sacred ambition to save his country, and in the intensity of his desire he believed he had the strength to fulfil it. "I shall come back with an army," he said to Jules Favre, "and if I have the honour of saving France I shall ask no more of fate."

At eleven o'clock in the morning of October 7 two balloons, the *Armand Barbès* and the *George Sand*, rose from the Place Saint-Pierre at Montmartre. In the first was Gambetta, and with him the intimate friend who was his chief confidant, Spuller—as well as the fortunes of France. The balloons, borne by a very gentle south-easterly breeze, left Saint-Denis on their right, but hardly had they crossed the line of forts when they were attacked, not only by a fusillade from the Prussian advanced-guard, but also by artillery fire. The balloons were at a height of less than two thousand feet, and the travellers could hear the whistle of the bullets. They therefore rose to an altitude that put them out of danger; but, owing to some accident or mismanagement, the balloon that was carrying the Minister of the Interior began to descend rapidly, and finally alighted in a field that had been crossed only a few hours earlier by some of the enemy's regiments, and was but a short distance from a German post. On some ballast being thrown out, the balloon rose and went safely on its way; but it had barely reached a height of 600 ft. when, near Creil, it was again attacked, this time by some Würtemberger troops, and Gambetta's hand was grazed by a bullet. Finally, he alighted near Montdidier, and reached Amiens in the evening.

He wrote to Paris: "The country is rising in every direction. The Government of National Defence is applauded everywhere." At Rouen he was presented with an address. "There is abundance of enthusiasm, but a lack of energy and leadership. Be in the provinces, as you have been in Paris, energy and leadership personified, and the enemy will be beaten back, France will be saved, the Republic will be finally and permanently established!"

"Let us sink all individual interests," he answered, "and

sacrifice all personal sentiments to the one thought of the country's salvation!" On reaching Tours he hastened to the Council. Thanking the crowd for their welcome, he said: "Neither you nor I have a moment to lose: this is no time for demonstrations. We must work: at this moment to work is to fight. Every man should be at his post." He then informed the departments of his arrival, and described to them the magnificent effort that was being made by Paris. "The situation lays great duties on your shoulders. The first duty of all is to concern yourselves with nothing whatever that is not the war—war *à outrance*. We must make the most of all our resources, and they are immense. The Republic calls upon every individual to play his part. It is a tradition with the Republic to love young leaders: we will make some! . . . No, it is not possible that the genius of France should be permanently eclipsed, or that this great nation should be robbed of her place in the world by an invasion of five hundred thousand men!"

His first care was to urge General Lefort to accept the portfolio for War (*Actes du Gouvernement de la Défense nationale, déposition du général Lefort*, vol. VI., p. 36). The general, whose health was still very bad, was firm in his refusal. It was then that Gambetta—who saw in the scheme a means of putting an end to the growing friction between the prefects and generals—suggested entrusting the two portfolios to the same hand. Crémieux and Glais-Bizoin opposed the idea, but Fourichon voted with Gambetta, whose casting vote settled the matter. The Minister of the Interior, therefore, became also Minister of War, to the great surprise of the Government of Paris, and curiously enough without a Decree. Later on, before the Commission of Inquiry, he stated the fact, but laid no stress on it: "I do not wish to contradict my colleagues on questions of no importance. I gave Admiral Fourichon the opportunity of keeping the portfolio for War, but he declined it; he said he had had enough of it."[1]

[1] November 13th, 1872. *Cf.* Trochu, Commission of Inquiry and *Le Siège de Paris*; Ernest Picard, Commission of Inquiry; Glais-Bizoin, *Dictature de cinq mois*, etc.

General Lefort gave an account of the situation to the new Minister, and told him the number of regiments that were ready to take the field. "General," said Gambetta, "we will put the state of affairs in writing, so that there may be no doubt as to what you have done and where we stand." And he sent a despatch to Jules Favre. "There really exists an Army of the Loire, numbering 110,000 men, all well armed and well equipped," he said. Here he was certainly exaggerating, but none the less much had been achieved.

The central administration of the Ministry of War was in an embryonic state. Only a quarter of the Ministerial bureaux had been sent to Tours. There were no archives, and no maps. Gambetta appointed M. Charles de Freycinet as his "deputy in the department of War," instructing him to "direct the affairs of that department in his name and place, within the limits that would be laid down for him by the Minister."

M. de Freycinet, once a pupil at the Polytechnic School, was a mining engineer who, while still quite young, had for four years directed the development of railways in the South. He had carried out various administrative missions and written several scientific essays; and when, on September 6, he was made prefect of his native department, Tarn-et-Garonne, he sent to the Delegation a memorandum that he and Jules Lecesne had written together on the best means of saving France from her perilous position. Having read this paper, Gambetta determined to make him his colleague. He was then forty-two, an indefatigable worker, clear-headed, quick, shrewd, imperturbable, a spring always stretched to its utmost limit, yet of fragile appearance. In a despatch to Jules Favre, Gambetta, after describing how he had transformed the Ministry of War, "since that was inevitable," added: "I have had the good fortune to find colleagues who are both enterprising and prudent; and I cannot pass over in silence the most able of them all, my Deputy in the Ministry of War, M. Charles de Freycinet, whose zeal and striking abilities are equal to the solving of all difficulties and the overcoming of all obstacles."

M. de Freycinet's first undertaking was the organisation of the chief administrative departments in the War Ministry. It has been complained that in his choice of officials the military element was not sufficiently prominent. But there was a great lack of officers, and those that were left were needed for the army: he was forced to appoint engineers and the higher railway officials. "There were many who eagerly offered their services," he said, "but often their patriotism was greater than their capacities."

In a short time, thanks to the efforts of a distinguished officer of Marines called Jusselain, the generals and staffs were provided with good maps. In spite of great difficulties, the telegraphic service was well organised under Steenackers: an entirely new department for investigation and inquiry was created by M. Cuvinot; and a committee for studying methods of defence, with Colonel Deshorties as chairman, was employed to discriminate between useful and worthless inventions.

The Department that was at first in the hands of General de Loverdo and then under General Haca sent 600,000 infantry and cavalry into the field in less than four months—"troops that were too raw," said Gambetta, but fought with great courage. The Ordnance Department was separated from that of the Engineers, which was placed under General Véronique, and in the same space of time Colonel Thoumas—promoted to General in December for his special services—and his admirable coadjutors, Colonel de Reffye at Nantes and General Demolon at Rennes, sent out 1,400 guns, that is to say, two batteries a day, fully equipped and manned. None of the armies lacked munitions; indeed, Chanzy said that his gunners enjoyed a positive orgy of them. Only Bourbaki ran short of them at the end of the campaign in the east, but that was owing to difficulties of transport.

During the first half of November some engineers of the Survey Department erected some fortifications at Orleans, which gained much approval from the generals, especially General d'Aurelle de Paladines. M. de Freycinet, therefore, created a corps of civil engineers which, by the end of the

war, numbered 52, with the addition of 200 section commanders.

At the time of Gambetta's arrival all the army supplies were supervised by one Assistant-Commissary. He was replaced by M. Férot, at one time general traffic manager of the railways of the west. Between October 15, 1870, and January 31, 1871, the army received 779,200 blankets, 677,400 great-coats, 957,200 pairs of trousers, 714,500 tunics and jerseys, 1,813,700 pairs of shoes, 697,000 haversacks, 17,000,000 rations of biscuits, 40,000,000 rations of rice, 11,000,000 of lard, 35,000,000 of salt, and 35,000,000 of sugar, coffee, etc. This considerable achievement did not make itself felt at once, nor in every place; it often happened that officers in command had to complain of insufficient supplies of clothing and equipment. In the middle of October, for instance, one of the two corps composing the Army of the Loire was fairly well equipped, but the other was still in want of many things; and in January there were certain corps of the Army of the East that had not enough equipment or clothing. Committees of officers and expert civilians were formed to superintend the buying of food, clothes, equipment and camp furniture. Sanitary arrangements were amply provided for.

The cadres were incomplete. It was necessary to double the strength of each company, at the risk of injuring the quality of the troops, in order to reduce the number of captains by half. Non-commissioned officers and even private soldiers received commissions. The Decree of October 13 suspended the ordinary rules of promotion for the duration of the war, which enabled officers like Billot, de Sonis and Loysel, lieutenant-colonels in October, to be in command of army corps in December. The Decree of October 14, following the example of the United States during the War of Secession, created an Auxiliary Army. This decree was much criticised: it was pointed out that if the 21 millions who composed the Federation of the North took four years to defeat the six millions of the Confederation of the South, this was owing to the inexperience of untrained

officers. M. de Freycinet himself recognised that some of these provisional appointments were not very fortunate, but it was thanks to this decree that Generals Bonnet, de Polignac, Pelissier, Cremer, Garibaldi, Bossack and Ochsenbein were in command of divisions, that Lipowski, Cathelineau, Keller, Bouras and Carayon-Latour distinguished themselves in leading the volunteers, and that our glorious sailors, Jauréguiberry, Jaurès, Penhoat, Payen, Bruat, Gougeard and others, won renown on the field of battle side by side with their brothers of the army. "If it be thought," said M. de Freycinet, "that the Auxiliary Army, notwithstanding its immense services, did not shine like that of the United States, let it be remembered that in America the war lasted for several years, while in France it was over in four months; it was only after being beaten for three years by the regular organisation of the South that the improvised generals of the North learnt to win in their turn. . . ."

One of the greatest anxieties of the new Government was the scarcity of arms and munitions. The *chassepots*[1] manufactured under the Empire, which were superior to the German rifles, had been captured by the enemy or were in besieged towns. The State factories only produced between 15,000 and 18,000 a month. The Armament Committee, which was connected with the Ministry of Public Works, had exhausted the rather limited English market, as appears from a despatch of September 28 from our Consul Tissot, and was now turning to America. In the three months that followed, it spent 200 millions in arms and munitions. In February the number of rifles supplied to the troops, irrespective of about 300,000 *chassepots*, amounted to more than 1,200,000. As they were of very varying types, the question of cartridges was a serious complication.

By a decree of November 3 each department was obliged to supply, at its own expense, within a period of two months, one completely equipped battery for every 100,000 inhabitants. The time allowed was too short, but the result was not to be

[1] The French breech-loading rifle of 1866–1874, called after its inventor, and first used in action at the Battle of Mentana (1867).—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

despised. The Committee appointed on February 19, 1871, to estimate the military resources of the country reported to the National Assembly that there were, at that time, 57 completely equipped batteries, with their full complement of men and horses, and 41 batteries complete as regards *matériel* only.

Finally, on November 25—the decree of November 2 having made all able-bodied men under forty eligible for the army—the Minister of War created eleven local camps to facilitate their training. The Government intended these to be permanent, and to form a basis for future military reforms; but here, too, time failed, and the measure did not achieve all that was expected of it.

The work to be done, however great the inevitable oversights and mistakes, was a gigantic undertaking. In 1914 an unfavourable critic[1] of the Delegation of Tours and Bordeaux maintained that, if the Government of National Defence was able to send armies into the field, this was thanks to the measures taken between August 10 and September 4 by the Comte de Palikao, Minister of War. Now Le Bœuf and Palikao themselves have shown this statement to be incorrect. On the declaration of war the army numbered 250,000 men. This figure should have been increased to 340,000 by the calling-up of the reserves on July 14; "but," said Le Bœuf to the Committee of Inquiry, "there was a very considerable deficiency: great numbers had been granted leave, and the civil hospitals were full." He estimated the effective forces at 300,000, of whom 250,000 were in the armies of the Rhine and of Châlons. The law of August 10 called up every man between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five, but could not be carried out, since the depots could neither hold, clothe, nor train so many. On September 4 the Militia comprised 120,000 at the most, with the addition of the 1869 class, who had been incorporated with it at the end of August and numbered 75,000; but they were neither clothed, nor equipped, nor formed into corps. The 1870 class was only to be called up on January 1,

[1] Dutrait-Crozon, *Gambetta et la Défense Nationale.*

1871. As for the artillery, the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier, President of the Contracts Committee, informed the National Assembly on May 22, 1872, that there were, when war was declared, 2,058 field-guns fit for use. But the loss of those captured at Sedan, and of those shut up in Metz and Paris, left the Delegation without a single complete battery at their disposal: they had nothing but the equipment necessary to form eighty. And in his book, *Un ministère de la Guerre de vingt-quatre jours*, Palikao declares that 600,000 new rifles were required, and that though he had passed contracts for 458,000, no more than 38,432 were delivered by the end of March, 1871. This shows us how much truth there is in the belief that the Palikao Ministry created the defensive forces of France in 1870.

General Borel, referring to the Delegation of Tours and Bordeaux, said to the Committee of Inquiry of the National Assembly: "Everything that was physically possible to be done, it did." Its work left the achievements of 1792 far behind. The men of '92, moreover, had much more time before them. The labours of M. Gambetta, M. de Freycinet and their colleagues earned them the undying gratitude of their country.

Gambetta restored the nation's self-confidence. The people's hearts were stirred by his glowing, forcible eloquence and his enthusiastic faith; their imagination was fired by the daring novelty of his perilous journey in the air. His proclamations thrilled them. France felt that she had a leader, and took heart again. He infected her with the energy and sparkle of youth. He had faith, when so many had none. Everything that he touched reflected the flame within him. It was in this—in this above all—that his greatness consisted. He was, and will always be in the eyes of posterity, the personification of that national, unanimous outburst of hostility to Germany that followed on the insult at Ferrières. To France, and to the whole world, he will always appear as the hero of the country's defence—of her resistance to the attacks of force and guile combined, and to the barbarities of the conqueror. The more hideous Bismarck's crime of falsifying

the Ems telegram grows in the eyes of civilised humanity, the finer will appear the figure of the man who did his utmost to repair the evil.

But at the moment the most urgent need was a sword, a military leader. Neither the lawyer of thirty-two nor the civil engineer of forty-two was capable of commanding an army: how could they have been? No art can be practised without training—and that art least of all. "What would I not give to be a soldier!" cried Robespierre in 1793 to the Committee of Public Safety, when he heard Carnot speaking of these things as one who understood the subject. And later on, when Gambetta sang the praises of Hoche, it was plain that he, too, had suffered from this longing. Gambetta and M. de Freycinet have been accused, not without reason, of interfering in the conduct of military operations. But they had first done everything in their power to find generals. Of those who had attained to distinction under the Second Empire, only Trochu and Bourbaki had escaped being taken prisoner at Sedan or besieged in Metz. Trochu, who was held fast in Paris, advised Gambetta to employ Bourbaki. "Keep Bourbaki at all costs," he wrote on October 19. "He will save the provinces as we shall save Paris."

Bourbaki at that time was fifty-six years of age. His career had been brilliant. He was a major at thirty, a colonel at thirty-six, and a general only a few days later. He had covered himself with glory in Africa and the Crimea, and finally had commanded the Imperial Guard. Having been deceived by false reports in Metz, he had followed the Empress to England, much to her surprise; then, instead of returning to Metz, he arrived at Tours on October 14 to put his services at the disposal of the Delegation. Gambetta at once offered him the command of the Army of the Loire. "Since France has need of your sword, and since I am not here to meddle with politics, I shall ask you no questions about your secrets, if you have any." And he used every effort to persuade him. But Bourbaki answered that "he did not feel equal to fulfilling all that the public expected of him," and would only consent to organise the forces of the north.

He had always been in command of picked troops—the African Light Infantry, the Zouaves and the Imperial Guard. He believed only in seasoned troops, and of these France had no more; he distrusted the "scratch collection of men" that were being turned into soldiers, and thought it would be wiser to conclude peace.

"A scratch collection of men!" And yet it was with such "scratch collections" that the Convention saved France in 1793, and that Prussia defeated Napoleon in 1813. And we know the tone that Napoleon took in 1814, when Angereau, whom he had made Duke of Castiglione, complained that he could do nothing with "conscripts without cartridge-pouches," and "miserable National Guards." "Really this is too ridiculous!" said Napoleon. "You are to set out within twelve hours of receiving these orders, to enter upon the campagn. If you are still Augereau de Castiglione, keep the command; if your sixty years weigh too heavily on you, hand it over to the senior general officer under you. The country is in danger; it can only be saved by audacity and goodwill, and not by foolish dallying. Be the first in the field! On with your boots and your resolute will of 1793! When our men see your plume at the outposts, and see you are the first to face the enemy's fire, you will be able to do what you like with them."

Gambetta, however, contented himself with saying to the hero of Inkerman: "You will change your opinion." He was too optimistic.

CHAPTER VI

THE DELEGATION OF TOURS AND THE MILITARY OPERATIONS

The Army of the Loire—Coulmiers—Beaune-la-Rolande—Loigny—Evacuation of Orleans (November 20–December 4)—Who was Responsible?

Of all the forces organised by the Government of National Defence, the Army of the Loire played the most important part. It was, as Colmar von der Goltz said, "the Grand Army of the Republic."

The 15th Army Corps, the first to be formed, was driven south of the Loire on October 10 and 11, and the Germans occupied Orleans. Gambetta, who reached Tours at about the same time as the news of this repulse, removed General de la Motterouge,[1] who was in command, and replaced him by General d'Aurelles de Paladines.

General d'Aurelle, who was sixty-six and had been in the Reserve since 1869, had fought in Africa and the Crimea as a colonel of Zouaves. He was a good soldier and one of undoubted courage, with an aptitude for training and disposing troops, but he had never commanded more than 10,000 men. Very wisely he declined the full powers that Gambetta offered him; he only accepted the command of the 15th and 16th Army Corps, and retired to Salbris—whence he covered Vierzon and Bourges—with a view to organising his forces there. Several days passed, during which—save for the splendid defence of Châteaudun, where a handful of heroes gave a noble example to the open towns—the 20,000 Bavarians of Von der Tann and 100,000 Frenchmen faced one another without engaging.

[1] Étienne Lamy explained the reasons for the removal of Motterouge in the *Correspondant* of June 25, 1903.

There then arrived some urgent despatches from the Government in Paris, with the news that a sortie by way of the lower Seine had been organised by Generals Trochu and Ducrot. It seemed to Gambetta and Bourbaki that, since there was then no organised force in Normandy, the project of these generals could only be seconded by moving the troops beyond the Loire from Bourges towards Rouen. A flanking movement of this kind, carried out on so long a line by young, untried troops, under the eyes of the hostile forces that were now being massed in the neighbourhood of Chartres, must be fraught with the greatest danger. Gambetta therefore desired, while the German forces were concentrated round Paris and Metz, to take the offensive against Von der Tann while he was twenty leagues from his base, and drive him back, thus raising the blockade of Paris. But to do this, it was first necessary to retake Orleans. On October 24 a conference was held at Salbris between M. de Freycinet and Generals d'Aurelle, Martin des Pallières, Pourcet, and Borel; and the next day they met again at Tours, with Gambetta presiding, to arrange the details of the enterprise. At the last moment, on the evening of the 28th, the Delegation learnt that the expedition would not take place. They were informed by General d'Aurelle that the weather was bad, the roads out of order, the equipment of a section of the militia defective, and that it would not be prudent in the circumstances to venture on so bold a movement. In the face of this despatch the Minister of War felt it impossible to issue to the general in command an order that might result in defeat. He simply answered: "Your hesitation, and the fears you express in your despatch force me to renounce a plan of whose value my opinion has not changed. The movement, therefore, must be stopped." On the following day came the terrible news: Bazaine has surrendered.

The cry of rage and despair wrung from Gambetta by the fall of Metz will echo down the centuries:

"Men of France, bestir yourselves, and brace your spirit to meet the appalling perils that are overwhelming your country! It rests with us still to wear down the evil fortune that pursues

us, and show the world the greatness of a nation that refuses to be crushed. . . .

"Metz has surrendered.

"A general in whom France trusted, even after the events in Mexico, has robbed our country in her danger of more than a hundred thousand of her defenders. . . ."

"The French army," he added, "despite the heroism of the troops, has been involved in the country's disasters through the treachery of its leaders! . . ." (October 30.)

It is clear that these words, "the treachery of its leaders," were meant to apply to Bazaine only. Certain officers, however, even though appointed by Gambetta himself, felt themselves insulted; and he therefore tried to reassure them in a proclamation addressed to the army on the following day. "You have been betrayed, but not dishonoured. . . . Now that you are rid of leaders unworthy of you and of France, are you prepared, *under generals who deserve your confidence,* to wash away in the invaders' blood the insult that has been hurled at the ancient name of France?" This time the meaning was plain enough; yet some of the generals continued to misinterpret it, and it was only a new proclamation on November 12, after the Battle of Coulmiers, that finally cleared up this disastrous misunderstanding.

The immediate consequence of the surrender of Metz was that the 180,000 men under Prince Frederick-Charles were set free to serve elsewhere. They might be expected to arrive about November 16 or 18; it was essential, therefore, at all costs, to take the first step.

Gambetta determined to employ the 15th and 16th Army Corps in the recapture of Orleans. General Chanzy, who had distinguished himself at the head of a division, was promoted to the command of the 16th Army Corps. General d'Aurelle conducted the operation. On November 9 the Army of the Loire advanced upon the plain of Coulmiers in perfect order; and Von der Tann, who had only 20,000 men and 110 guns, against 60,000 men and 150 guns, was outflanked. The French generals, Peytavin and Barry, dashed forward at the head of their troops, like their forerunners of the Revolution,

inspiring their men to follow. Admiral Jauréguiberry, said the soldiers, navigated his little horse as skilfully as a ship in a gale. At four o'clock Von der Tann evacuated Orleans and fell back on Artenay.

The French army fought valiantly; our men, each and all, showed splendid courage and dash; our artillery fire was unerring. But unfortunately General Reyau, who should have turned the enemy's right with his cavalry, fell back when he saw Lipowski's riflemen in the distance, taking them for Germans; and Martin des Pallières, who was coming up by the right bank of the Loire with 30,000 infantry, 44 guns and 800 horse, did not arrive in time. He was carrying out his orders, be it said, but so rapid an advance was unexpected.

These circumstances detracted considerably from the effects of the victory of Coulmiers. Yet it was an undeniable victory which, in the words of the general in command, "strengthened the *morale* of the troops tenfold" and made a deep impression both in France and abroad. It was our greatest success of the whole war, and seemed to promise a change in our fortunes. The Army of the Loire had come gloriously through its baptism of fire, and was apparently to be the instrument of our approaching revenge.

The surprise of the Germans was extreme. A Bavarian officer wrote to his family: "It was said that the Army of the Loire had ceased to exist, and that the enemy's forces were worn out, and now suddenly there springs up a well-organised corps, with formidable artillery, admirably mounted cavalry, and infantry that have shown us what they can do. The situation has changed, and in a most disquieting way for us."

Gambetta addressed a proclamation to the army. "Your courage and exertions," he said, "have at last brought us the victory that has been denied to our arms for three months. France in her mourning owes you her first consolation, her first ray of hope. . . . Under leaders whose vigilance and devotion are worthy of you, you have recovered discipline and strength. You have restored Orleans to us, and overpowered veteran troops who have long been accustomed to victory. . . . You are the advanced-guard of the entire country, and

to-day your feet are on the road to Paris. . . . Paris awaits us: our honour is at stake: she must be rescued from the barbarians' clutches. . . . With such soldiers as you the Republic will rise triumphant from her present trials: having organised her defences she can now avenge the nation. . . ."

The Germans expected that the French army would at once follow up the victory of Coulmiers by marching to Paris. This fear can be detected in the telegrams sent by King William on November 9, 10, and even 11 to Queen Augusta, to explain the defeat and reassure her with regard to its consequences. He laid great stress on the fact that the French, instead of advancing towards the capital, were securing the positions they had won. Moltke wrote on the 14th to General von Stiehle, Chief of Staff to Frederick-Charles: "The Army of the Loire has failed to recognise its own capacity to push on to Paris, fighting as it advances: yet that is its only hope of success. Apparently it dares not make an attack. A strong offensive by the enemy would be no less dangerous for us from the West than from the South. It is possible that the Army of the Loire will confine itself to a passive defence of Orleans, but that is very unlikely, since Gambetta knows for certain that Paris cannot hold out unless the blockade be raised. We are very grateful to His Royal Highness (Prince Frederick-Charles) for hastening his march: it helped us out of a kind of crisis." Then, alluding to the "movements of the Army of the Loire, of which we unfortunately know so little," Moltke adds that they must expect, on the 15th, a sortie of the Paris garrison "on a larger scale than those hitherto attempted."

Thus, from November 12 to 14, the situation caused real uneasiness at the German General Headquarters. Moltke faced the possibility that the blockade of Paris might be raised, and recognised on the 14th that a sort of strategical crisis had occurred.

And indeed, according to the statistics in the archives of the Ministry of War, the French troops within sixty kilometres of Toury amounted to 150,000 infantry and 8,000 cavalry, against whom the Germans were only able to bring 35,000

infantry and 11,000 cavalry. The army of Frederick-Charles, which had reached the Troyes-Vandeuvre-Chaumont line on the 10th, was too far away to support the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg with an army corps before November 16, or with his entire force before the 21st. We had at least three days at our disposal after the 13th to deal with the Grand Duke before the arrival of Frederick-Charles. Moreover, the German General Staff could not draw upon the troops investing Paris, since a sortie on a large scale was expected.

Such was the situation when Gambetta and M. de Freycinet went to Villeneuve-d'Ingré on the 12th, to congratulate the generals, thank the troops, and bestow rewards. They found there Generals d'Aurelle, Borel, and des Pallières, the officers in command of the Artillery and Engineers, and the Prefect of the Loire with his secretary.

With regard to what passed at Villeneuve-d'Ingré on this occasion, neither eye-witnesses nor historians are agreed. I questioned M. de Freycinet on the subject, and this was his answer: "It was not a Council of War, in the proper meaning of the term. We had come, Gambetta and I, to congratulate the generals and ask them for information. In the course of the interview I put this question to D'Aurelle: 'What do you think of doing? Do you think you can march on Paris?' D'Aurelle merely uttered an exclamation. Borel said: 'We must first find out the strength and positions of the enemy.' D'Aurelle declared that the troops were tired out, and the matter was dropped as far as that meeting was concerned. There was no definite suggestion made, nor was there any discussion. It was understood that the troops would remain at Orleans for the time being, awaiting news from Paris."

M. de Freycinet's statements agree with his account of the occasion in the *Souvenirs* he published in 1912. He says there: "General d'Aurelle opposed the idea of a march on Paris, which seemed to be suggested as a possibility in General Borel's explanations."

D'Aurelle, in his book *La Première armée de la Loire*, says that a march on Paris would have been "a mad attempt." He thought the good effects of the Battle of Coulmiers might

be undone if recently formed troops of little training and little experience were sent out to the relief of Paris. He did not know, moreover, the exact numbers and positions of the Germans, and he considerably exaggerated their strength. Being a person of discretion, he kept his counsel (*La Première armée de la Loire*, page 130), but he had firmly decided to entrench his troops before Orleans in carefully chosen and prepared positions, and there to await the shock of the combined German forces—Prince Frederick-Charles from Metz, the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg from D'Angerville, and von der Tann, who joined the Grand Duke near Loury, seven or eight leagues from Coulmiers, and was placed under his orders on the 10th.

Before the Committee of Inquiry of the National Assembly General Borel was asked by a member if the Commander-in-Chief had had serious reasons for failing to pursue the enemy after his victory. The witness unhesitatingly answered "Yes, certainly"; and explained that, since the Bavarians had been able to retire in good order, the pursuing troops would have been obliged to engage in a second battle, and might have found the enemy considerably reinforced. No doubt, he said, a pursuit would have rendered the retreat less orderly, but the French could not have fought their way to Paris with the means at their disposal.

General Chanzy added his evidence in *La Deuxième armée de la Loire* (p. 35): "If the Government at Tours had been less preoccupied with the position at Orleans, which it wished to make the base of future operations, and *if the general in command had thought the Army of the Loire sufficiently complete and equipped to continue its advance,* it might *perhaps* have been possible, by taking advantage of the enthusiasm roused by the victory of the 9th, to reach and defeat General von der Tann's Army before it was reinforced by the Grand Duke's, and then to attack the latter, thus dealing with the Germans separately before the arrival of Prince Frederick-Charles."

And, in trying to grasp the situation, we must not forget that, while the Battle of Coulmiers was being fought

Trochu and Ducrot were making their final preparations for the sortie by the lower Siene. They only heard of the victory at Coulmiers on November 14, and were obliged to change all their plans. It would therefore have been difficult to time their movement towards Orleans so as to coincide with an advance by the Army of the Loire.

One thing is certain: the Commander-in-Chief received no orders at Villeneuve-d'Ingré to march on Paris. It is also evident that, if Gambetta and M. de Freycinet had firmly believed at that time in the possibility of an immediate pursuit, they would at least have taken the precaution of leaving some record of their opinion, since a decision on one side or the other was likely to involve very serious consequences. Gambetta thought of it: that is proved by the question put by Freycinet to D'Aurelle. But when the Commander-in-Chief rejected the idea it was agreed by all, on that occasion, that the army should remain at Orleans.

There was this difference, however, between the views of the Minister of War and those of the general in command. The former regarded Orleans as a base for further offensives, to be promptly undertaken; while the latter proposed to wait there for the enemy's attacks. Gambetta's plans were dependent on sorties from Paris, which could not be long delayed, while D'Aurelle's design was merely to help Paris by means of a powerful diversion. His project might perhaps have been the better of the two, had Paris not appealed for support. It was a plan that meant a long war. By waiting on the defensive for the enemy, and taking the time to organise troops with the triple advantage of numbers, supplies and arms, it might have been possible eventually to secure the last word. But there was Paris in the case—and Paris was issuing orders. A choice had to be made between the two schemes; and to ask D'Aurelle to carry out a plan he thought impracticable was to court dangerous complications.

Meanwhile Frederick-Charles was approaching from Metz by forced marches. On November 20 he reached Pithiviers with 14,000 infantry, 1,200 cavalry and 84 guns. The 9th Army Corps had preceded him in the direction of Fon-

tainebleau, to cover Paris on the south. On the 17th the Prince had thus expressed his view of the situation. "It seems to me not impossible that the enemy at this moment may mass all the available French troops near Orleans. The next few weeks will be interesting; they will decide the fate of Europe for a long time to come."

Three days later he judged the numbers of the French forces to be 120,000 or 150,000. "I think the destruction of the Army of the Loire," he said, "or even its mere repulse, would largely contribute to the end of the war. After all, the immense exertions of France can only inspire respect, and it would be dangerous to the last degree not to take them seriously. . . . I am going in search of the enemy in the direction of Artenay as soon as the 10th Army Corps is sufficiently rested to join me." He postponed his offensive, which had been previously fixed for November 21, in order to make the attack with all his forces united and in good condition.

In the meantime the Ministry of War was doing its utmost to reinforce the two army corps that had fought at Coulmiers. By November 19 three new army corps, though far from complete, had gone to the front: the 18th and 20th to the right wing, near Nevers and Gien, under Billot and De Crouzat, and the 17th to the left, under Durrien, who was soon displaced by De Sonis. The 16th Army Corps, which comprised only two divisions, was reinforced by a third on the Châteaudun road.

D'Aurelle, faithful to his plan, still considered his first duty to be the completion of his entrenched camp. "Not until all these works are finished," he wrote to the Minister of War on November 18, "and these batteries mounted, will the Army of the Loire be free to act."

Gambetta urged the Government in Paris to attempt a sortie, and at the same time charged D'Aurelle (on November 19) to "make his position into a Sebastopol."

Up to this time, then, he thought it rested with the garrison of Paris to take the offensive. But in the afternoon of the same day his opinion was changed by the latest news from

the capital—the food supplies must infallibly come to an end by December 15. That night M. de Freycinet requested the Commander-in-Chief to draw up a plan of operations that should bring the army closer to the capital. "We cannot stay at Orleans for ever; Paris is hungry, and needs our help. So find out the best route to bring you into touch with Trochu, who will march to meet you with 150,000 men, at the same time that a diversion is attempted in the north. We, too, are working at a plan here. As soon as you have made up your mind on this serious matter, let me know; we will meet at Tours or at your headquarters to discuss it."

The next day the general answered: "Before I can make a plan for meeting General Trochu I must be fully informed of the course of events in Paris and of the intentions of that officer. As for your own plan, I will consider it as soon as you are good enough to submit it to me."

"Pray think of a plan of operations," answered Gambetta, "with Paris for its main objective. I cannot admit that, before you can do so, you must know General Trochu's designs. We have no news: it is only by chance, and quite intermittently, that we can obtain any: this gives us another unknown quantity in our problem. . . . After all, it is enough to suppose that Paris knows of our presence in Orleans, and that therefore the Parisians will infallibly move in the arc of the circle of which Orleans is the central point. I am presuming that you would take into consideration the general, but certain, information upon which we must act."

On the following day, the 21st, M. de Freycinet's secretary arrived at Villeneuve-d'Ingré with these instructions for General D'Aurelle, written hastily on a sheet of notepaper:[1]

"1st. Des Pallières to set out towards Pithiviers on the 23rd inst., with about thirty thousand men; 2ndly, Pithiviers to be occupied by the same officer on the 24th. A formal order will be sent in the course of the 22nd to General d'Aurelle to carry out the above-mentioned movement. The whole of to-morrow to be occupied in a detailed examination of the district." M. de Freycinet further gave direct orders

[1] *Archives historiques du ministère de la Guerre, carton D. 6.*

to General Crouzat to proceed on the 22nd to Les Bordes with his whole army-corps, the 20th. On the 22nd he telegraphed to D'Aurelle to send the 1st Division of the 15th Army Corps, on the 24th, to a point between Juranville and Beaune-la-Rolande.

What were the Government's reasons for making these sudden decisions, when only the day before the Commander-in-Chief had been instructed to "think of a plan of operations"? The Grand Duke of Mecklenburg's victorious march from Dreux on Nogent-le-Rotrou had brought a threat of danger to Le Mans, and even to Tours. "We tried to meet the danger," wrote M. de Freycinet, "by making on the enemy's left, in the direction of Pithiviers, a diversion that would oblige him to turn back his troops towards the north-east." But at that moment it was precisely towards the east that the Grand Duke was moving, in response to a summons from Frederick-Charles on the 21st. Moreover, the effective forces of the Germans were greatly over-estimated at Tours.

Hearing that the sortie from Paris would not take place for several days, the Minister of War fixed upon the 24th and 25th for the offensive. General d'Aurelle, though "desperate," gave the necessary orders, but felt it his duty to express his views on the subject to the Minister.

"*Saint-Jean-de-la-Ruelle, 23rd November,* 1870, *2 o'clock in the morning.* Having made all my arrangements for the execution of your orders, I have still one duty to perform, namely, to tell you my frank opinion on the subject of the operation you demand, and the consequences it may entail." He explained that, since Pithiviers was within the concentration-zone of a Prussian Army, "seventy or eighty thousand strong," the suggested movement would provoke a general engagement, within one day's march of fortified positions. "Instead of remaining in our own lines we should be seeking out the enemy in his, at the risk of our guns being stuck in the mud and being perfectly useless to us, since it is impossible to move them on roads that are not metalled. In such conditions as these, the operation you have ordered me to

undertake on Pithiviers does not seem to me to present a sufficient chance of success to be attempted. If it were a failure it might place us in a very serious position."

And on the same day, answering a letter that Gambetta wrote to him on the 20th, he said: "You instruct me to think of a plan of operations with Paris for the chief objective. The solution of that problem is not the least of my labours. To solve it, one must have co-operation and mutual understanding between the Government and the Army, represented by the generals to whom you have given your confidence. As far as I am concerned, you can count on my absolute fidelity. May God make my powers equal to my devotion!"

Gambetta having gone to Le Mans, M. de Freycinet answered: "To your objections, the import of which I perfectly understand, I will simply reply: If you were to bring me a better plan than mine, or even a plan of any kind, I might give up my own and revoke my orders; but you have now been twelve days in Orleans, and in spite of reiterated requests from both M. Gambetta and myself, you have not proposed any sort of plan. As M. Gambetta and I have already explained to you, *Paris is hungry and asks for help.* It is not in our power, therefore, to leave you for the whole winter in Orleans. I say *the whole winter,* because there is no chance, for the next three or four months, that the weather will become less severe or the enemy less numerous all round you. Now the numbers of the Prussians on the one hand, and the wet state of the ground on the other, are the objections you put forward. These conditions will persist, I repeat, for a much longer time than Paris will have food to eat. We must therefore put an end to the state of passivity from which the supreme need of our country forces us to rouse ourselves. I can only, then—save for some slight changes, introduced in consequence of your letter of to-day—adhere to the orders already given for the movement to be carried out by Des Pallières and De Crouzat, and I send you a copy of my despatch of this evening, which I now confirm. This movement, I may say, was planned in concert with M. Gambetta, and has his full approval." (November 23.)

Even on the very morning of the 25th D'Aurelle criticised the plans arranged for that day by the War Ministry, and seemed ready to accept the idea of a general offensive later on, "See how our forces are scattered," he said, "though they are expected to aim at the same goal, and it would be greatly to our advantage to be concentrated."

To this M. de Freycinet answered: "I have discussed the matter with M. Gambetta, and this is the reply I have to transmit to you. . . .' We admit the bad state of the roads, and the scattering of the forces that is entailed by a simultaneous movement towards Montargis, Beaumont and Pithiviers; but every plan has its risks, and we must believe that the risks in this case are no greater than in others, since no other plan has been proposed to us by you, and yet a plan of some kind is absolutely indispensable in view of the urgent circumstances of which you know. This is the first we have heard of your plan of *attacking in all directions, with all your forces assembled at Orleans;* and whatever may be its intrinsic value, you must see that it is now too late to adopt it, since our movement has made considerable progress.'"

Thus, despite the representations of the general in command, the Government did not give up the design of making a diversion at Pithiviers, but only consented to carry it out less hastily, at the same time reserving the right of issuing further orders from Tours. M. de Freycinet expressly says, in his book *La Guerre en Province*: "The operations began in the morning of the 24th, according to the plan laid down. They had this special character, which was shared by no other undertaking between October 10 and February 10: they were conducted directly by the Ministry of War."

It seems rather inexplicable that General d'Aurelle de Paladines did not send in his resignation at this juncture. He gave the most honourable reasons for not doing so: his loyalty to discipline, for instance, and his noble desire to serve his country to the end. There have been notable examples, however, of a different point of view. Condé, Turenne and Luxembourg all stood firm against Louvois, and in this very war, at this very time, Moltke refused, in his

Memorandum to the King on November 30, 1870, to submit to Bismarck's interference.

This was Napoleon's opinion in the matter: "Any general in command who undertakes to carry out a plan he considers bad, is blameworthy. He should give his reasons, and insist on the plan being changed; and finally send in his resignation rather than be the instrument of his army's destruction."

Von der Goltz, and others with him, declared: "There were two courses: either to leave the Commander-in-Chief free to act as he thought best, or to replace him." Certainly, if Chanzy had replaced D'Aurelle at this moment, the issue of the war might have been changed; but on November 23 Chanzy was not yet in a position to be awarded the chief command. Nor was it possible to remove the general who had won the only victory of the war. Neither the country nor the army would have understood such a measure. Dilemmas of this kind are more easily stated after the event than solved at the moment!

Be this as it may, on this November 23 the enemy had only two bodies of troops to bring against us, the Grand Duke's Army of 46,000 men, and the Army of Frederick-Charles, which numbered 55,000. They were separated from one another by a distance of about a hundred and twenty kilometres—the distance, that is to say, between the Grand Duke's headquarters at Theil and the Prince's headquarters at Pithiviers. We, on the other hand, had about 180,000 men between Laigle and Gien. It is easy to imagine a manœuvre that would have enabled the Army of the Loire to defeat these two forces successively before marching on Paris. What happened was exactly the reverse of this: the Army of the Loire, instead of attacking in mass, only engaged the right wing, which was repulsed on the 28th. Four days later the left was engaged, and defeated for the same reasons.

On the 24th, Martin des Pallières' Division and the 20th Army Corp under Crouzat marched on Pithiviers—Des Pallières by way of Chilleurs, and Crouzat by Beaune-la-Rolande. Near Neuville, Des Pallières repulsed a Prussian reconnoitring party, but Crouzat met two of the enemy's

brigades, who barred his way to Ladon and Maizières. The movement was checked; the 25th, 26th and 27th were wasted; and Frederick-Charles gained some valuable time. On the 28th the offensive was resumed. Crouzat opposed 60,000 men to 10,000 Germans, who, from eight-thirty in the morning to three in the afternoon, held back our troops. All the attacks on Beaune-la-Rolande by the 20th Army Corps were failures, in spite of the courage of our men, who, as the enemy said, "fought with a sort of savage enthusiasm that recalled the splendid days of the first Revolution." The 18th Army Corps, under Billot, broke the enemy's first line in the Juranville-Lorcy-Corbeille region, but failed to join the 20th Army Corps in time. On the arrival upon the battle-field of a division hastily despatched by Frederick-Charles, Crouzat was forced to fall back on Nesploy, Nibelle and Chambon.

This first encounter, then, in which the Army of the Loire had engaged only its right wing, and the 18th and 20th Army Corps had fought independently of one another, was not a success. Gambetta, however, at first received inaccurate news of the battle, and wrote to Jules Favre: "Our conscripts of the 18th Army Corps have beaten, at Beaune-la-Rolande, the 10th Prussian Army Corps, commanded by Frederick-Charles himself." Such was his belief at the time, and he hoped this excellent news would hasten the sortie of the troops in Paris.

The news of the victory at Coulmiers had reached Paris on November 18, whereupon the Government had immediately made arrangements for a sortie on a large scale towards the south. A plan had been ready by the 20th, and on the 24th Trochu telegraphed to the Delegation at Tours: "On March 29 the outer garrison, commanded by General Ducrot, the most energetic of our generals, will attack the enemy's fortified positions, and if he carries them will push on towards the Loire, probably in the direction of Gien." But, by one of the fatalities that so often occurred in this war, the Government in Paris had entrusted the telegram to one balloon only. On the 25th this balloon reached the ground in Norway, at a spot a hundred leagues north of Christiania: it was four days

later when the aeronauts reached the French Consul, who telegraphed to Tours at once, that is to say, on the 29th; but when the message was received by the delegates on the 30th the sortie had already taken place on the previous day. Gambetta was distracted. He instantly sent off five messengers to meet General Ducrot, and assure him that the Army of the Loire would march to join him. A hundred and twenty thousand men, followed by a reserve corps, set out towards Fontainebleau in two columns, one by Pithiviers and the other by Beaumont. At the same time D'Aurelle was instructed to "prepare a vigorous offensive." The general suggested marching at once upon Étampes, or else upon Rambouillet, and asked to be informed without delay what his objective was to be, and what troops he was to take. M. de Freycinet answered: "I will explain to you in person what we want you to do, and we will discuss it together." (November 30, 3.35 p.m.) At nine o'clock the deputy of the Minister of War reached headquarters at Saint-Jean-de-la-Ruelle, and a Council of War was held at once, with Generals d'Aurelle, Chanzy and Borel present.

"The generals," says M. de Freycinet in *La Guerre en Province,* "did not for a moment hesitate to go to meet General Ducrot. They made no secret, however, of the drawbacks that would ensue from so hasty a departure. They approved of the general conception of the enterprise, the march on Fontainebleau by way of Pithiviers and Beaune-la-Rolande, and the co-operation of the five army corps under the supreme command—from the morrow onwards—of General d'Aurelle."

D'Aurelle and Chanzy give rather a different account of the matter. They admit that they accepted the principle of the design, but claim to have made definite reservations with regard to its execution, explaining that the operation would be very dangerous if the enemy were concentrated round Pithiviers, and that the first thing to be done was to defeat the enemy's troops near Janville, using the 15th and 17th Army Corps for the purpose.

In *La Deuxième Armée de la Loire* Chanzy says that when

M. de Freycinet had explained the plan drawn up at Tours the generals pointed out that the operation would be full of danger, seeing that all the enemy's forces were massed round Pithiviers, and the sortie from Paris was still a matter of uncertainty. But the plan was enforced, as being a definite order from the Government. "It was decided," he adds, "that the 16th Army Corps, which formed part of the left wing, should march in the direction of Janville and Toury the next day; that the 17th should follow it and serve as its reserve; and that, on December 2 the 15th, 18th and 20th Army Corps should advance towards Pithiviers in their turn, by means of a concentric movement."

D'Aurelle, for his part, says in *La Première armée de la Loire*: "M. de Freycinet maintained that Chanzy's troops were more than sufficient to beat the Duke of Mecklenburg, and ended by declaring that the plan proposed was irrevocably decreed by the Government at Tours." The Commander-in-Chief answered: "If Chanzy's Army Corps (the 16th) be left to carry out this movement alone, it will be in danger of extinction."

The operations began in accordance with the plan laid down. On December 1 our arms were successful. Chanzy captured Guillonville and defeated the enemy at Villepion. The next morning a proclamation by Gambetta was read in every corner of France. After describing the principal phases of the fight under the walls of Paris, he exclaimed: "The genius of France, which for a moment was hidden, has again appeared! Thanks to the exertions of the whole country, victory has returned to us, and as though to make us forget the long series of our misfortunes, is favouring us at nearly every point. . . . Our troops from Orleans are advancing with all speed. Our two great armies are marching to meet one another. . . . Who can doubt, then, the final issue of this gigantic struggle?" But the next day came the news that, despite prodigies of valour, the troops from Paris had been forced back within the walls: the blockade was in no way relieved. And while the sortie from Paris was repulsed at Champigny, on the same day, December 2, after

a battle at Loigny which lasted from nine o'clock in the morning to six in the evening, the 16th Army Corps and the 17th under Sonis, which Chanzy had called to his aid, were completely overpowered.

At half-past one in the afternoon of the 2nd, Frederick-Charles received a message from the King to "march directly upon Orleans and deliver a decisive attack without delay." The Prince at once gave orders to his troops, and to those of the Grand Duke, to converge on Orleans. Passing our right wing—the 18th and 20th Army Corps, which were separated from the scene of action by a distance of over forty kilometres as the crow flies—he hurled all his forces upon our centre. By the morning of the 3rd the French Army was in full retreat.

At four o'clock on that same night the Commander-in-Chief wrote that the defence of Orleans had become impossible. This news was greeted at Tours with horror and despair. D'Aurelle received orders to concentrate all his forces, but replied that there was not time enough for the purpose. Gambetta then summoned his colleagues of the Delegation, and it was decided to leave the general to choose his own method of retreat. But meanwhile D'Aurelle had reached Orleans, and the arrival of Des Pallières with his division had given him fresh confidence and changed his view of the situation. He brought the 16th and 17th Army Corps to Orleans, and summoned the 18th and 20th. The Delegation expressed great satisfaction to the general, adding: "M. Gambetta sets out for Orleans in half an hour."

A few hours later D'Aurelle, as he looked at the streets of Orleans, thronged with a confused mass of disorganised troops, again felt convinced that any attempt at resistance was vain. At four o'clock he ordered his forces to withdraw from the town, and informed the Delegation that his efforts were of no avail, and Orleans would be evacuated during the night of the 4th. The train in which Gambetta was travelling to Orleans was stopped at La Chapelle-Saint-Mesmin by the fire of some German patrols, and sent back to Beaugency. There Gambetta was told of the disaster, upon which he returned to Tours.

"As soon as we rose on the morning of the 5th," says General Thoumas, "we went to M. de Freycinet's house, where we found Gambetta, who had spent several hours of mortal weariness waiting at the station of Beaugency. He had heard of the evacuation of Orleans, and had returned to Tours in despair. When I saw him during the morning of the 5th his eyes were swollen and red with weeping: he gave my hand a fervent clasp of intense feeling, and kept silence for several moments. Whatever may be said of the man, I must bear witness, after seeing him on this and several other occasions, that he loved his country passionately, and his intense patriotism completely effaces, in my opinion, any mistakes he may have made."

"Thus befell," says M. de Freycinet, "the greatest disaster of the second period of the war, the disaster that decided the fate of France." To say the least, the enormous achievements of Gambetta and his eminent colleague had been very largely neutralised.

An immense amount of argument has been expended on the causes of this disaster. The civil administration held the Commander-in-Chief responsible; the Commander-in-Chief blamed the civil administration. The initial cause is clearly apparent: everything was subordinated to the relief of Paris. The civil authorities at Tours were merely delegates of the Central Government, to whose will they were subservient in making this their main object. Whenever Paris seemed to offer them a chance they expended all the fervour of their patriotism in trying to take advantage of it. Had the matter been left to the Commander-in-Chief, he would first have seasoned and organised his troops; he thought the best way of aiding Paris was to await the enemy under the walls of Orleans; he did not regard Paris as his most immediate objective, whereas in the eyes of the delegates at Tours the relief of the capital before it was forced to surrender was the first of all considerations. The presence of the Government in Paris —that was the great blunder that dominated this period of the war.

But, when once the offensive had been undertaken, who was responsible for the reverse that followed?

On the evening of November 30 the German front measured about sixty-five kilometres in length, and formed a barrier of nearly unvarying width between Paris and the Army of the Loire. A force of 80,000 infantry and 18,000 cavalry, with 472 guns, had been concentrated in order to take part in the impending battle. The French Army was disposed in a curve measuring about seventy-five kilometres. The outposts of six of our divisions were in contact with those of the enemy: the 1st Division of the 16th Army Corps, the three divisions comprising the 15th, one division of the 20th, and one of the 18th; that is to say, about 100,000 men. Why was it that not one-third of these forces were ever combined to deliver a decisive attack?

"Because," said D'Aurelle, "it was not until the 2nd that I received the command of the right wing, that is to say, of the 18th and 20th Army Corps, which until then had been in the hands of the Minister of War. They were at so great a distance when they received their orders that before they were on the march the Prussian Army was already at the gates of Orleans."

The despatch from the Minister of War on which D'Aurelle bases this statement was written on December 2, at 4.55 in the afternoon. "*It is understood*," it runs, "that from this day forward you will give your strategical instructions directly to the 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th and 20th Army Corps. *Until yesterday* I issued their orders to the 18th and 20th, and occasionally to the 17th: henceforward I shall leave this duty to you." This despatch was a confirmation of orders already sent on the preceding day. As a matter of fact the Commander-in-Chief had issued instructions to these army corps on the 1st, and even as early as the evening of the 30th.

Certain military critics have maintained that, since our outposts were in contact with those of the enemy on a very wide front, our various army corps, separated though they were, might have advanced simultaneously. It is conceivable that a general of sufficient daring, had he followed this plan, and

converged all the forces of his right wing upon the enemy on December 1, might have won a victory. This is the opinion which Colonel V. Dupuis, head of the historical section of the General Staff, supports in his book, *La Direction de la Guerre* (1912). But this plan was not that adopted at Saint-Jean-de-la-Ruelle: the five army corps were ordered to advance in succession, and no concerted action was arranged until the 2nd.

There was, moreover, another fact that was greatly to the enemy's advantage. The German troops were well acquainted with their leaders, whereas the French generals in several cases were appointed at the last moment. Sonis received the command of the 17th Army Corps on November 22, and since D'Aurelle was unable to dispose his forces, as a whole, until December 1, it was only on the 3rd that Bourbaki arrived post-haste to command the right wing. And the mutual suspicion, the constant skirmishes between the chief military command and the civil administration, neither of whom knew very much of the enemy's movements, were a bad preparation for a decisive battle, which demanded unity both in will and action.

Such were the days between November 24 and December 4, 1870. Sad days they were—of hopes that died early, of heroism and sublime martyrdom, of mingled sorrow and glory: days when Chanzy and Jauréguiberry won endless renown, when Sonis, Charette and Bouillé covered themselves with honour, and the untried troops of France fought with marvellous courage: yet days for ever accursed, for once again, on these days, the fortunes of France were shamefully, and most cruelly, hazarded and lost.

It was at this moment that Bismarck proposed to Austria an alliance with Prussia. His first suggestions on the subject appeared in a despatch of December 14. Until then, Austria had observed great reticence with regard to Prussia's exactions. Her attitude thenceforward was modified, and a few months later Bismarck's overtures ended in the Austro-German Alliance that was destined to weigh so heavily on the politics of Europe, and to bring, in years to come, such terrible consequences on the whole world.

CHAPTER VII

THE END OF THE DELEGATION

The Delegation at Bordeaux—The Eastern Campaign—Denfert-Rochereau at Belfort —Faidherbe in the North—(December 8, 1870–February, 1871)—The Armistice —Gambetta's Resignation—(January 29–February 6, 1871).

THE Army of the Loire was now cut in two: the 15th, 18th, and 20th Army Corps were in retreat on the southern side of the river, the 16th and 17th, also retreating, were on the right bank. From these scattered forces the Delegation formed two armies, giving the command of one to Bourbaki and of the other to Chanzy. Tours being now in danger, the delegates themselves retired to Bordeaux on December 8, with the exception of Gambetta, who first spent some time with the army. His resolution and courage were unshaken. "I will make head against the storm," he wrote to Jules Favre. "Not for an instant have I dreamt of despair."

Two days after the defeat at Orleans Chanzy was in a condition to face Frederick-Charles upon the plains of Josnes. There Gambetta joined him. "I found everything here in perfect order," he says, "thanks to General Chanzy's determination and unconquerable energy." Chanzy was at that time forty-seven years of age: "an officer," Gambetta says of him, "whose influence with his troops, military experience and decision of character are his most striking qualities." At Coulmiers and in the subsequent battles Chanzy had given evidence enough of his penetrating sagacity and strength of will. His temperament was calm and yet energetic, and, above all, he believed in ultimate victory. Whether victorious or not, those who have believed in France's destiny have always won her faithful devotion.

Chanzy now embarked upon the series of battles that at least delayed the final success of the enemy. He asked Bourbaki for his support. Moltke feared the junction of the two armies, and the War Office strongly urged this step. But a distance of a hundred kilometres now lay between them, for Bourbaki had been forced to retire, by snowy, ice-bound roads, as far as Bourges. His troops were greatly exhausted, and Gambetta, who made an expedition to Bourges to inquire into the situation, telegraphed from thence to Bordeaux: "The 16th, 18th, and 20th Army Corps are in a state of positive collapse: they are the saddest sight I have ever seen." (December 12.)

From the time of the capture of Orleans until December 16, the line from Gien to Orleans was held by a narrow belt of German troops, who would have been quite unequal to resisting any determined movement on the part of Bourbaki's army. The latter remained inactive till the 19th. Meanwhile Frederick-Charles, being aware of Bourbaki's intentions, left the Loir and reached Orleans by forced marches on the 17th. Thenceforward the conditions were completely changed.

Bourbaki's headquarters had already been moved to Baugy, when M. de Freycinet despatched to Bourges a certain engineer named De Serres, in whom he placed great confidence, to suggest a new plan to Gambetta: namely, the removal of Bourbaki's army to the east of France by rail, to raise the blockade of Belfort and to cut the enemy's lines of communication.

Serres laid the scheme before Gambetta. The Minister of War hesitated; but consented to an interview between Serres and Bourbaki, and promised that, should the general approve of the plan, he himself would raise no objection. Serres then went to the Commander-in-Chief and, having pointed out the dangers of an advance in view of the Germans' rapid approach, found no difficulty in convincing him. That same evening Bourbaki wrote to Gambetta that he was prepared to carry out the operation, and thus the affair was settled.

The idea of an expedition to the east of France, which General Le Flô had advocated as early as the previous Sep-

tember, had more than once been entertained by Gambetta. On November 14 he had telegraphed to Freycinet to inquire into the practicability of an offensive in the east.

On January 2, as soon as Chanzy at Le Mans heard of the new plan, he wrote to dissuade Gambetta from it, and proposed another: that the three armies—of the Loire, of the East, and of the North—should converge on the capital. But by this time the Government in Paris had already sanctioned the advance eastwards, and Bourbaki had set out.

The general was more than ever convinced that resistance was useless. M. de Freycinet in his fear that this depressed attitude of mind would have a bad effect, sent De Serres with the expedition in the capacity of special Commissioner. In his pocket was the general's recall.

The success of the campaign was endangered from the first by the delays in transport: the journey occupied a fortnight instead of six or seven days.

Bourbaki had good reason to complain that two promises made to him were not fulfilled. He was led to expect the support of 100,000 militia from the south, whereas only 18,000 arrived; and he was promised supplies from Besançon. He was further disappointed in having no covering troops either on his flank or at the rear, and there were no facilities for organisation.

The operations began, however. Bourbaki advanced on Vesoul, and on January 9 captured Villersexel. The march was not resumed till the 13th. On the 15th, twenty-five days after the departure from Bourges, 45,000 Germans and 120,000 French joined issue in the battle known as that of Héricourt, the battle that was to decide the fate of Belfort. On the 16th our troops were no more than two leagues distant from that town.

But the rest of the army did not advance. On the 17th a general attack was repulsed. A temperature of eighteen degrees of frost benumbed the troops, while their provisions ran short: many of the men were too much exhausted or too ill to fight. The horses, too, fell in harness. Bourbaki lost heart, and retired on Besançon on January 22.

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In the meantime Moltke had despatched Manteuffel to the scene of action. He reached Gray on the 19th, with the intention of barring Bourbaki's way and trapping him in the Jura. He marched towards the Doubs without the smallest effort being made to stop him; partly because the Ministry of War was receiving inaccurate news of his movements from Dijon, where Garibaldi was on the alert, though ill; and partly because Bourbaki always believed that the forces opposed to him were stronger than his own.

What was he to do? On the 24th he held a Council of War. All his officers were agreed that he should fall back on Pontarlier, and towards Pontarlier, accordingly, he marched, with the intention of skirting the Swiss frontier in the direction of the Rhône Valley. But Manteuffel had already reached Salins. The trap was closing. In his despair Bourbaki pointed a revolver at his forehead and pulled the trigger. The bullet flattened on his skull, but it failed to kill him.

At the same moment he was relieved of his command. The retreat was continued by Clinchant, his successor, who found himself trapped between Werder and Manteuffel. Even then he thought he was saved by the armistice that Jules Favre had just signed at Versailles, being unaware that the extent of country covered by the treaty was not to be defined, as far as the east was concerned, until the military situation was accurately known. Moltke telegraphed to Manteuffel that the truce, as yet, did not include the departments of the Côte-d'Or, the Doubs, or the Jura. Clinchant, in his ignorance of this clause, had checked his retreat, with the result that he was completely hemmed in, and forced to escape into Switzerland. On February 2 he and his 80,000 men crossed the frontier.

While these events were taking place in the east, General Faidherbe, in the north, was bravely upholding the honour of our flag. "He is a man who can think, and can look ahead," said Gambetta, "and that is a man rarely found in these days of ours." On January 3 he drove the enemy from Bapaume; but on the 19th the bitterly disputed Battle of St. Quentin resulted in favour of the Germans. Gambetta

went to Lille, where he found the inhabitants greatly discouraged. "The war is horrible," he cried, "and every one of us should hate it, but it is a necessity in the circumstances. Do not forget that peace means the mutilation of our country. Have we any right to sacrifice three millions of French men and women to that greedy Germany? Should we not feel ashamed to surrender thousands of Alsatians? It would be a violation of the rights of us all, to think that a part of our country could be given up as a man gives up a part of his flocks and herds. France is the common property of the whole French nation, and every clod of earth that France covers with her flag is owned by every one of us. This sense of solidarity is the basis of our policy—our policy of resistance *à outrance*. . . . No weakness, then! If we do not give way to despair, we shall save France yet. When that happy day comes it will be seen that, if I am possessed by a passion of patriotism that cannot endure a foreign invasion, I am also deeply inspired by the republican faith, which has a horror of dictatorship!" (January 22.)

On the morning of January 29 he received, at Bordeaux, this telegram from Jules Favre: "*Versailles, January* 28, 1871, 11.15 *in the evening*.—We have signed to-day a treaty with Count Bismarck.—An armistice of twenty-one days has been arranged.—An Assembly is convoked at Bordeaux for February 15.—Publish this news in every part of France; see that the armistice is carried out, and convoke the electors for February 8.—A member of the Government is starting for Bordeaux." All officers in command of troops at once received orders to cease hostilities.

The whole of the 29th was spent at Bordeaux in the expectation of further news. On the 30th, Gambetta telegraphed to Jules Favre, complaining of this silence. "The country is in a fever," he said, "and will not be content with those three lines of yours. Nothing has been heard as yet of the member of the Government whose arrival here you mention, but whose name you have not told us. Meanwhile it is impossible, beyond the mere fulfilment of the armistice by the troops, to which we have attended, to take the proper measures for

summoning the electors, without further explanations from you, and without knowing the fate of Paris."

It was Bismarck who received this telegram. He did not transmit it to the Government in Paris until the following day; but he answered Gambetta himself. "*Versailles, January* 31, 12.15 *in the morning*.—Your telegram to M. Jules Favre, who has just left Versailles, will be given to him to-morrow morning in Paris. *By way of information* I have the honour to communicate the following facts to you: The armistice that was concluded on the 28th will end on February 19. The line of demarcation between the two armies starts from Pont-l'Évêque in Calvados, crosses the department of the Orne, leaves to the German army of occupation the departments of the Sarthe, Indre-et-Loire, Loir-et-Cher, Loiret, and Yonne, enters obliquely the region of the Côte-d'Or, the Doubs, and the Jura, and leaves the north, with Pas-de-Calais and Havre, intact. . . . Hostilities will continue before Belfort, and in the departments of the Doubs, the Jura, and the Côte-d'Or, till some further agreement has been made. The National Assembly is to be convoked. All the fortifications of Paris are to be surrendered. The troops in Paris are prisoners of war, except such as are necessary for maintaining order in the city. The National Guard will not be disarmed. The German troops will not enter the city during the armistice. Paris will be re-victualled. Freedom of movement is to be allowed for the elections. I may add that the forts have been occupied to-day by our troops, and I think the elections are fixed for the 8th, and the meeting of the Assembly at Bordeaux is to be held on the 12th. Food has absolutely come to an end in Paris, and the population is living on the supplies of the German army. The Assembly will decide the question of the war, or fix the conditions of peace."

To Gambetta and his colleagues this despatch was a thunderbolt. The Army of the East, then, was excluded from the armistice, the lines of demarcation had been arranged at Versailles, and Jules Favre had said no word on the subject!

A few hours later Gambetta received from Chanzy, to whom it was given by Prince Frederick-Charles, the actual

text of the treaty. Gambetta at once telegraphed to General Clinchant, and to Garibaldi to continue hostilities. But Manteuffel, for his part, had no intention of interrupting his march : he had refused Clinchant's request for a suspension of hostilities for thirty-six hours. On January 29 Clinchant had still thirty hours left in which to cross the Jura and approach the Bresse; but those thirty hours were simply thrown away. The Army of the East, obeying orders, had remained stationary, whereas Manteuffel had been told to carry on his operations "until they produced a decisive result." Before the armistice the campaign had failed, but the army had not been annihilated : it was the armistice that gave the final blow.

Bismarck—treacherous as always, and proud of it—had set a trap for Jules Favre. In Paris there were still hopes of Bourbaki's success; and it was to avoid interrupting his advance that the French plenipotentiary consented to leave the Army of the East out of the treaty for the time being. His precautions served him ill.

As for the lines of demarcation in the other invaded departments, Bismarck insisted that they should be fixed at Versailles and nowhere else. Now, in the case of an armistice, it is usual to leave these matters to be settled by the officers commanding the belligerent forces at the places in question. On this occasion especially the rule should have been observed, since the person acting as negotiator had been in a besieged city for four months, and could not know how the armies outside Paris were situated.The line of demarcation defined at Versailles in these circumstances cost us two *arrondissements* in Calvados, half of Indre-et-Loire and of the Loiret with the valleys of the Cher and the Vienne, half of the Yonne and part of Morvan, and the whole of the left bank of the Seine, with Saint-Valéry-en-Caux, Bolbec, Lanquetot, and Lillebonne.

When Gambetta at last heard of these stipulations his indignation and grief were deep and bitter, for it had always been understood that the Government in Paris should treat for Paris alone and not for the whole of France.—In a despatch he had sent to Paris on January 27 he said : "To capitulate

as a Government you have neither the power nor the right. Indeed, having been surrounded in Paris for the past four months, and forced by famine to open the gates to the enemy, you can only negotiate for the town, and merely as the representatives of the town. It is Paris that has been reduced, in short, not France, and any inclusion of other territory will end in your giving the enemy advantages that he is very far from having won. Anything you may do, over and above your care for the interests of Paris itself, will be null and void. . . . As for us—the central authority, and the actual Government since the capitulation—our way is clear. We must continue the war till we are rid of the enemy—that is the task before us."

At that time the Government in Paris was of Gambetta's opinion. Jules Ferry wrote to him on December 15, 1870: "If the enemy should subdue Paris by famine it shall be made quite plain that Paris is not France; and he will find no one—I will swear to that—willing to make terms with him for France. Some one will take you our last will and testament; but we shall bequeath France to you to defend, behind the Loire or the Garonne, in Toulon or in Cherbourg, as though Paris did not exist." Jules Favre, too, said on January 9, 1871: "It would be horrible if Paris were to fall on the very eve of deliverance. However that may be, France will not yield, and whatever our fate we should feel we had a share in her defence. . . . France will not sheathe her sword until her cause shall have triumphed." On the 14th, General Trochu wrote to Gambetta: "I think with you that, should Paris yield to the pressure of hunger, France and the Republic should only increase their exertions and carry on their glorious struggle to the death." And when Jules Favre, on the 21st, forty-eight hours after the Battle of Buzenval, was writing to say that the time had come to capitulate, he added: "I do not know what the conditions will be. If Prussia will consent not to occupy Paris I will give up a fort, and I shall ask that Paris may only be subjected to the payment of a subsidy. If these proposals be rejected we shall be forced to surrender at discretion. In that case it is probable, supposing we are not

killed in the threatened riots, that we shall go to some fortress in Pomerania, where our imprisonment will serve to encourage the country in its resistance."

Thus, twenty-four hours before asking Bismarck's permission to go to Versailles, and there negotiate the surrender of Paris, Jules Favre—having heard on the previous day of Chanzy's defeat at Le Mans—was picturing himself in Pomerania, encouraging, to use his own words, the country's resistance by his imprisonment. Gambetta had just received this despatch when he heard the news of the armistice.

In *Le Gouvernement de la Défense nationale* Jules Simon has described to us how the Government in Paris, after a long debate, was led to modify its views. At first all were agreed that only Paris was concerned, that neither the country nor the Delegation must be involved. But then arose the question,—supposing the enemy were to refuse this condition, what should be done? Must it be upheld, at the cost of surrendering Paris itself unconditionally? It was recognised that this was impossible: an attempt must first be made to limit the armistice, and if the enemy should refuse, the point must be yielded. There next arose a doubt whether the limitation of the armistice were really desirable. A treaty thus limited would enable the powerful army then investing Paris to march against such of the French troops as were still in the field. These were already exhausted, and quite incapable of contending with new enemies. Moreover, an Assembly was necessary. This last consideration convinced the generals and the whole Council that the armistice must apply to the country at large.

On January 31 Gambetta was still without news of the member of the Government in Paris who was to bring him, according to the telegram of the 28th, instructions with regard to convoking the electors. Feeling he could remain passive no longer, he published this proclamation: "An armistice has been signed without our knowledge, and without a word of warning or consultation. Belated information has reached us of the culpable weakness with which departments occupied by our troops have been delivered into the hands of the Prussians,

while we are pledged to remain inactive for three weeks. Being the delegates of the Government we felt it right to obey, as a guarantee of moderation and good faith, and to carry out the rule of conduct that bids us remain at our post till we are relieved. No one has come from Paris, however, and action is imperative."

This proclamation was followed by a Decree arranging the formalities of the coming elections, and disqualifying as deputies all who had accepted, between December 2, 1851, and September 4, 1870, the office of Minister, senator, councillor of state, or prefect, or the title of official candidate. This measure was not prompted by the impulse of the moment. Repeatedly since September, 1870, whenever there was any question of convoking an Assembly, Gambetta had stoutly maintained that every man who had made his mark under the Empire should suffer some form of humiliation, however temporary, at the hands of universal suffrage. This Decree, which was not only despotic but futile—since of the 768 deputies elected an enormous proportion were Bonapartists—roused a storm of protest. Bismarck seized the opportunity to meddle in the domestic affairs of France. According to the terms of the armistice the Assembly was to be "freely elected." Bismarck forthwith telegraphed to Gambetta: "In the name of the liberty for which the armistice stipulates in the elections, I protest against the measure *published in your name* for depriving large classes of French citizens of the right to be elected to the Assembly. Elections carried out under the pressure of tyrannical force cannot confer the same rights as are allowed by the terms of the armistice to deputies elected in freedom."

Gambetta informed the country of Bismarck's telegram in these terms: "The insolent claims of the Prussian Minister to interfere in the constitution of a French Assembly is a most striking justification of the measures taken by the Government of the Republic. The lesson will not be thrown away on those who have any sense of national honour." (February 3.)

Meanwhile, on February 1, Jules Simon, the envoy from Paris, arrived at Bordeaux. He brought with him a Decree

passed on the 29th by the central Government, defining eligibility for the Assembly in accordance with the Law of 1849, and thus making Gambetta's measure ineffectual. Jules Simon, in the name of the sovereign principle of universal suffrage, demanded the suppression of the disqualifying clause. The Delegation refused to comply. He then declared that, in virtue of the full powers with which he was invested, he would annul the offending Decree. He drew up a proclamation, but the delegates intercepted it and prevented it from being published.

On the 4th a meeting was held at the Grand Theatre, with the object of appointing Gambetta to the office of Dictator. He refused to attend the meeting, and expressed the strongest disapproval of its objects. Above all things, civil war was to be avoided.

Jules Simon summoned three other members of the Government in Paris—Garnier-Pagès, Emmanuel Arago, and Eugène Pelletan—to insure a majority on his own side. They arrived at Bordeaux on the 6th; upon which Gambetta addressed a circular to the prefects, maintaining his views on the disqualifying clause, but advising them to proceed with the elections. "These measures," he said of the action taken by the Government in Paris, "amount not only to strong disapproval, but to the virtual dismissal of the Minister of the Interior and of War. The divergence in opinion, on domestic and foreign affairs alike, is so plain as to leave no room for doubt. It is my duty to resign my position as a member of a Government with whom I am no longer in accord, either in ideas or aspirations. I have the honour to inform you that I have sent in my resignation to-day."

He felt the parting with his colleagues very deeply. General Thoumas has described the scene in *Paris, Tours, Bordeaux.* "Before parting from you, let me thank you for the devoted support you have so consistently given me," he said. "As for me, I have played my part: there is nothing for me to do now but to retire." "Then he came up to each of us separately, and, pressing our hands, thanked us again most warmly. Such was Gambetta's farewell. He had shown immense

energy and patriotism, but unfortunately did not know enough of the machinery he had to work. I have seen him since then in very different circumstances. I always heard him speak of some future day of reckoning as the supreme goal of his aspirations and hopes. But I always picture him on that cold January day when, calm outwardly, but in a voice choked with suppressed sobs, he bade us a despairing farewell. I confess I loved that man, and in this I was not alone!"

CHAPTER VIII

WAR À OUTRANCE

Gambetta's Domestic and Foreign Policy during the War—The Admiration of the Enemy—The Prolonged Resistance did not Aggravate the Terms of Peace—It paved the Way for the Future.

GAMBETTA once said at Tours: "I should feel I was robbing the country if I were to take one hour, or even one minute, from the affairs of national defence, and devote it to domestic policy." But the maintenance of unity in the country is a matter of national defence. On arriving at Tours he had found the authority of the Government treated with scant respect at several places, notably at Lyons and Marseilles. At Lyons the municipal council had voted the imposition of a tax on capital, but a threat of dissolution from Gambetta soon reduced it to submission. At Marseilles the republican municipal council was held in awe by a departmental committee of anarchical tenets. Esquiros was wavering. Gambetta, who on September 4 had ordered the removal of the red flag that adorned the prefecture, telegraphed to him: "Remember, I beseech you, that the policy of the Government is national defence, and nothing but defence." And when Esquiros imprisoned twelve priests, expelled the Jesuits, sequestrated their property, and proposed to apply the same treatment to other communities, Gambetta wrote: "It is with the deepest regret that I see people neglecting the question of defence in favour of other matters. As regards religious communities do not forget that, though it may be possible in extreme cases to find points of law opposed to the spirit of federation—which it is the part of a Republic to encourage—and permitting the expulsion of Jesuits, it is absolutely neces-

sary to respect the personal liberty of individuals. As for foreigners enrolled in the Order of Jesuits, they can go; but in the case of Frenchmen, the moment the community is dissolved your power over them ceases, and indeed they have every right to count on your protection."

La Gazette du Midi having published a manifesto by the Comte de Chambord and a letter from the Prince de Joinville, the paper was suppressed by Esquiros. "I hear," wrote Gambetta, "that the office of the *Gazette du Midi* has been raided and the publication of the paper stopped. Acts of violence against liberty and property cannot possibly be allowed to go on. I count on you to take prompt measures to safeguard the liberty of the Press. Of course, if the editors or proprietors of the paper were to commit any act contrary to the laws of the Republic, you should take energetic measures and report the matter to me." Esquiros stood to his guns; and Gambetta answered: "The Republic owes it to itself to stand firm amid all the strife of parties, and to insist on the laws being respected, but on nothing more. Firmness has nothing in common with tyranny. . . . It is out of the question to suspend the publication of a paper. If individuals make plots, deal severely with them, but leave their organ free. It is a question on which I cannot yield." (October 14.)

Esquiros sent in his resignation; and Gambetta published two Decrees.

"Touching the Decree suppressing the *Gazette du Mili,*" ran the first: "Whereas the Government of the Republic cannot permit newspapers and writers to suffer penalties save for deliberate violation of the law; Whereas, on the other hand, it must be shown that the Republic is the only form of government that can preserve the liberty of the Press in its entirety, and since it is not for those who have always demanded that liberty when in opposition to limit or mutilate it; it is decreed: The Order issued by the Administration of the Bouches-du-Rhône suppressing the *Gazette du Midi* is annulled, and the paper is authorised to appear henceforward."

The second was as follows:—

"Touching the prefect's order expelling the members of

unauthorised religious communities, and sequestrating their property: Whereas, though the community may be legally dissolved, the personal liberty of the French citizens who compose it cannot be infringed, nor their right of residence in France violated; it is decreed: All orders of expulsion applying to any French member of an unauthorised religious community are null, void, and not to be enforced."

Great was the excitement in Marseilles. The *Ligue du Midi* extended the order dissolving the local community of Jesuits to all the communities in the department. Violent demonstrations took place, and pressure was brought to bear on Gambetta from every quarter. "I am receiving one deputation after another," he wrote to Jules Favre; "but I shall not yield in a matter of principle." And he appointed Gent to succeed Esquiros.

Like Danton, whom the horror of invasion and the contact with grim reality transformed into a statesman and a patriot, he sought for unity before all things, and condemned everything that tended to discord. He refused to countenance contentions of any kind, either religious or social.

His policy in the matter of municipal councils was entirely dictated by the needs of national defence. On September 7 he addressed a circular to the prefects. "Above all," he told them, "you should make it a rule, as far as you can, to preserve the existing town-councils, and turn them to the best possible account in the cause of national defence." Very few changes were made in these councils.

The departmental and district councils were treated in the same way, until the decree of dissolution was passed on December 25. By that time the difficulties arising from the war had greatly increased, party-spirit had grown aggressive, and there was less possibility of combating it. Gambetta took drastic measures. He called upon his colleagues to "use the knife ruthlessly," and to "sweep away these creatures of the fallen Monarchy, who are openly conspiring against the Republic and the safety of France."

He has been blamed for forbidding the Prince de Joinville to serve in the Army of the Loire. The question arose on the

very morrow of the fall of the Empire, and the Government was unanimous in its refusal: it was impossible for Gambetta to override, in December, the decision made four months earlier by the Government he represented.

Immediately on the fall of the Empire, while the enemy's troops were pouring into the country, he had been obliged to organise the prefectorial administration in every corner of France. Men were suddenly thrust into positions that are usually only attained after long apprenticeship in lower grades. Not all his appointments, certainly, were above criticism; there were cases of excess in zeal, failure in tact, and lack of experience; there were ardent partisans who thought more of their own aims than of the public interest. It may be noted, however, that among the prefects he appointed there were many men who afterwards filled the highest offices of the State: Sadi Carnot, Challemel-Lacour, Antonin Dubost, De Freycinet, Paul Bert, Ricard, Allain-Targé; Tirman, who became Governor-General of Algeria; Massicault, afterwards Resident General in Tunisia; Camescasse, who became Prefect of Police; Edmond Valentin, the intrepid Prefect of Strasburg; Anatole de La Forge, the gallant defender of St. Quentin; Alphonse Gent, who restored order in the South, and a great number of men who have since represented in our Assemblies the departments whose affairs they then administered. Ranc was at the head of the Police. With few exceptions, every man was worthy of his office, and played his part in maintaining order.

When Gambetta arrived at Bordeaux on December 30 he said with some pride: "It will always be held greatly to the credit of the Government of National Defence that it had both the will and the power to grant a remarkable amount of liberty, in the midst of the most overwhelming crisis that a nation has ever endured." On the following day he again proclaimed "respect for liberty—liberty even to slander and insult." And a few years later, when he was again in Bordeaux, on January 13, 1876, he cried: "It was here—driven back and held at bay by the enemy, with forty-three departments invaded and ravaged, with the capital besieged

and blockaded, with Europe hostile or at best contemptuous, with party-spirit raging round it—that the Government of National Defence held its own. And with what weapons? The rights of the public. For not a single liberty of the public, neither the liberty of the Press, nor the right to hold meetings, nor the right to form associations—not one of them was ever attacked or violated. So much for dictatorship!"

This testimony that he bore to the justice of his own domestic policy during the war has long been echoed by all parties, and by all the most eminent and impartial witnesses, with regard to his foreign policy at the same time.

In September and October Thiers had begged the Governments of other countries to intervene, but, for reasons we have already given, he met with the same answer everywhere: in London, Vienna, St. Petersburg, and Florence. The foreign Governments treated him with the most perfect courtesy, but firmly declined to take action.

On October 29 Prince Gortschakoff took advantage of the European situation to evade some of the results of Russia's defeat in the Crimea. He instructed all the diplomatic agents of Russia to repudiate the treaty of 1856, and especially the clause by which the Black Sea was made neutral. The various Chancelleries exchanged views on the subject, and it was decided that a conference should be held in London to settle the question. Bismarck, fearing that the conflict between France and Germany would be brought into the discussion by the French envoys, stipulated that the conference should concern itself with nothing but the navigation of the Black Sea.

Jules Favre had sent to Tours, to superintend foreign affairs, the Comte de Chaudordy, formerly private secretary to Drouyn de Lhuys, a keen, shrewd, able negotiator, educated in the best school of diplomacy. Chaudordy took with him some assistants of notable talent, among them a young secretary who afterwards became a famous historian, Albert Sorel. Gambetta perceived Chaudordy's diplomatic ability, and gave him his entire confidence. The part that France might play at the

conference was clearly apparent to these two men: it was an opportunity for her to escape from her terrible *tête-à-tête* with Prussia. Chaudordy, in the name of the Delegation, wrote repeatedly to Jules Favre, urging him to go to London.

Jules Favre, at first, failed to see any reason for attending the congress. To leave Paris at the height of the bombardment, and forsake his friends in their hour of most acute danger, would surely be an act of the basest desertion! He told no one of Chaudordy's first letters, and consulted none of his colleagues.

Gambetta then tried his own powers of persuasion. In a despatch of December 31, which reached Jules Favre on January 9, he said: "It rests with you to enlarge the very limited programme of the conference; and no one will dare to stop you when you speak of Paris, and the war with France. No protest from Prussia will have any power to stop you. . . ." And again on the 16th: "You can do it, and you should. I attach the same importance, in its own way, to your presence in London as to an immediate sortie from the capital by General Trochu. After all, in both cases it is the country's salvation that is at stake."

When some more letters from Chaudordy reached Paris on the 17th, Jules Favre laid them before the Council, and it was decided that he should be present at the conference. But various incidents, in which Bismarck's hand was apparent, led the Government to change its opinion: Paris was at the end of its resources, and its fate would be decided before the French envoy could reach England.

If we ask whether France would have met with any support in London, we may find the answer to our question in Lord Granville's despatch of February 4 to Lord Lyons: "If the French plenipotentiary were to introduce the question of a peace at the conference, I should have no choice but to call him to order; but if, at the end of the conference, or after one of the sittings, he should wish to take advantage of the plenipotentiaries' presence to lay any particular questions before them, there would be no need for me to interfere: each plenipotentiary would have to act as he thought right, or in accordance

with his instructions; for myself, I should not fail to pay attention to anything that might be said to me by the French plenipotentiary." It is obvious that a clever diplomatist or a skilled orator might turn this suggestion to excellent account. In any case the attempt must be made: anything was better than absence or isolation. Failing Jules Favre, Gambetta and Chaudordy had thought of Thiers, and even of Guizot. It is possible that Gambetta had Chaudordy himself in his mind.

On December 16 Chaudordy requested England and the other powers to support one or other of these three proposals: either an armistice and the re-victualling of Paris, to enable the general elections to take place; or the conclusion of peace without the cession of any territory; or the meeting of a congress that might prevail on France to make greater sacrifices and thus end the unequal struggle. Lord Granville at once laid these proposals before Bismarck, but on the 19th the Chancellor answered that public feeling in Germany forbade him to consent to any of these suggestions.[1]

In recording Chaudordy's principal diplomatic activities we must on no account forget his protest, on November 29, against the German atrocities. The horrors committed by the Germans in 1870 were less numerous than those of 1914, because the war was shorter and extended over a smaller area, but their nature was the same. In 1870 there was, indeed, an even more serious crime. The German generals, professing to forget that in 1813, in obedience to a Prussian order of April 23, "the *Landsturm* wore no uniforms or special badges, since these uniforms or badges would cause them to be recognised by the enemy," announced at the opening of hostilities that "our *francs-tireurs* would be shot without trial." This practice continued throughout the war. An official proclamation was published in the Ardennes on December 10, 1870, by General Senden, Chief of Staff. "Any individual," it ran, "who is not a member of the regular army nor of the militia, and is found carrying a weapon, whether a *franc-tireur* or known by any other name, will, if taken in any act of

[1] *Correspondence respecting War between France and Germany*, 1870–1871, No. 317, No. 320.

hostility against our troops, be regarded as a traitor and hanged or shot without further trial. Whenever *francs-tireurs* appear in a commune the Mayor must inform the commandant of the nearest Prussian contingent. . . . Houses and villages sheltering *francs-tireurs* will, if the troops be attacked, be burned or bombarded."

Chaudordy scourged the Germans before the eyes of the whole world for their shameless exactions, both in money and kind, their summary executions of harmless citizens, their barbarities, their willing adoption of the most savage methods of warfare in order to terrorise the population. He gave a long list of authenticated facts proving that the enemy had been guilty of violence and devastation in all their most odious forms: robbery, pillage, rape, murder, massacre and mutilation of hostages, of the wounded, of doctors, old men, women and children. At Châteaudun, for instance, sick persons were shot, and some even burnt alive in their beds and pulled out of the flames blackened and charred; hundreds of people of every age and condition, invalids, old men, and lads, were seized at random and sent as prisoners to Germany; 235 houses were drenched with oil and burnt.

To these examples must be added the bombardment of cathedrals, as at Strasburg, of museums, libraries, schools, ambulances, hospitals—the Val-de-Grace, the Salpêtrière, the Charité, and others—and the burning of open towns. It was always the same "system of terror," always the same justification of Goethe's words: "The German is born cruel, but civilisation will make him ferocious." And Chaudordy closed his indictment with this accusation: "These horrors will make the present war the disgrace of our century."

The Germans have never made war in any other fashion. They were equally ferocious in 1814 and 1815. Their military methods, like their diplomatic methods, have remained the same through all the ages. But each time France, in her generosity, has forgotten.

And now let us estimate, as far as possible, the part played by Gambetta in this war.

As Minister of War he accomplished, with the help of Freycinet, in the course of four months, a work so colossal that it is one of the great achievements of history. Financially, France already had the advantage: these men made her superior also in numbers and means of defence. They would have won the war for her, had not Germany possessed more seasoned troops and more experienced generals. Moreover, there never lived a more inspired orator: his daring, and his deeply moving pathos could work miracles, could rouse the soul of an entire people. It was France herself who spoke with his lips. Nothing can rob him of this double title to fame and honour.

The passage of time was not needed to win him recognition abroad—and there is a famous saying which describes the foreigner as "a sort of contemporary posterity."

Five days after the surrender of Metz, Moltke wrote to General von Stiehle: "We must do justice to the great resources of this country, and to the patriotism of the French. After seeing her entire army taken prisoner, France has contrived in a very short time to put into the field a new army that is deserving of our whole attention." And in December he wrote: "The German army, by operations of unparalleled success, captured the whole of the forces that the enemy put in the field at the beginning of the war. France, none the less, found means to create, within a period of barely three months, a new army that was still larger than the first. The resources of the enemy's country, which are apparently almost inexhaustible, might make the rapid and decisive success of our arms a matter of doubt, but for the fact that on our side the country's effort is no less strenuous." The records of the Prussian General Headquarters show signs of his surprise on every page. "This conflict has given us so many causes for amazement from the military point of view," he says, "that we shall have to devote long years of peace to the study of the subject."

In 1874 Colmar von der Goltz, at that time Chief of the Staff, published an account of Gambetta and his armies in the *Preussische Jahrbücher*. "Gambetta," he said, "had given

evidence of the most brilliant qualities as an organiser: in a short time he had united all parties, aroused the masses, and used his immense will-power to direct all the forces at his command towards a single goal, war *à outrance*. No one can deny that in these circumstances he showed great courage and a very uncommon degree of moral force. The immense army he raised, armed, clothed, and organised, speaks volumes for his genius. He accomplished this gigantic task in a shorter time than any organiser before him has ever required. . . . It is unjust to accuse him of obtaining these results by sacrificing quite disproportionate sums of money: for the finances were most ably administered at Tours and Bordeaux, and, if the circumstances be taken into account, by no means extravagantly. . . . As for the attacks and suspicions to which Gambetta's personal honour has sometimes been subjected, they are not worth considering. In this he only shared the fate common to fallen greatness everywhere. When the giant is overthrown, the pygmies can fearlessly trample on his body. Anyone who has seen, if but for a moment, this man's nature reflected in his open countenance will know that he was incapable of saving a sack of gold from the shipwreck of his country. . . .

"History will bring his greatness to light and will wipe out the shadows and stains. Two claims to immortal fame will be allowed him. The first is that he restored France to a sense of her own power immediately after a fall so great as hers. The second is that he paved the way for a moral regeneration, of which one cannot deny the results in France to-day, by forcibly impelling his compatriots towards an ideal goal. If ever—which God forbid!—our country should suffer a defeat such as France suffered at Sedan, I trust there may be a man like Gambetta to inspire her with the spirit of resistance carried to its utmost limit."

Louis Schneider, William I.'s biographer, writes thus in his *Aus meinem Leben*, which the monarch himself read and annotated: "The Emperor always listened with special interest to any account of Gambetta's marvellous activity, and on several occasions spoke of him, as well as of Generals

Chanzy and Faidherbe, with great respect. Later on, I was one day showing him at Berlin a collection of illustrations which very strikingly applied the best known passages of Schiller's *Jungfrau von Orleans* to the war with France, when I came to the line: 'Can I make armies spring from the earth by stamping on the ground?' 'All the same,' said the Emperor, 'I know some one who can do that—and that is Gambetta.' And one day he remarked to the Crown Prince: "Remember, my son, that if by the grace of God our successes in the great war astounded the world, there were, none the less, times when not even all our good fortune saved me from doubts of the final result.'"

On the other hand, Gambetta received more than one tribute from his political opponents at home. On December 3, 1870, Guizot wrote these words to the Government of National Defence. "Many people are not as grateful to you as you deserve. You believed—though nearly all the world was sceptical—that Paris would make an heroic defence, and that in the provinces there would be an outburst of patriotic enthusiasm. You have carried on the war without any appeal to revolutionary passions, and while advocating peace, provided it were neither shameful nor futile, you have rallied all the available forces of the country and produced armies that have proved their efficiency. You have behaved like men of fine feeling and like good citizens."

It was at a later date that the Duc Albert de Broglie wrote: "In the matter of patriotic energy the France of 1870 was in no way inferior to her predecessor of 1792. The France of our day was indeed superior in one respect to the France whose glory she inherited: her resistance was unanimous. Political, social and religious animosities, which cut so deeply athwart the first ordeal, on the second occasion were silent in the presence of the enemy. Therefore the generation that will soon have passed away will have a place in history by the side of the generation that preceded it. The Greek orator swore by the memory of the warriors of Platæa and Marathon that Athens had been worthy of herself at Chæronea, and we, too, can say that those who fell at

Jemmapes and Fleurus found worthy successors in the heroic dead of Loigny and Champigny."

Albert de Mun has recorded, not without pathos, the enthusiasm and emotion of the officers of the Metz garrison, when they heard at Mainz, on their way to captivity in Germany, that the struggle was not over. "Suddenly we pictured the whole country under arms, convulsed in one gigantic effort. Paris stood firm, the provinces were arming. How it comforted our bleeding hearts! Whose were the hands that kept the flag flying? We did not care to know, since at least it was flying still, though ours were captured. Only those who experienced, after the horrible nightmare, the overpowering reaction of this unexpected awakening, can measure the depth of our emotion. We yielded to it almost proudly, and while we felt no confidence in victory the hope arose in us of some future resurrection."

The great lack in this war was a military leader. Chanzy was not in command of an army sufficiently early: by the time he appeared on the horizon of our misfortunes the right moment had gone by. At the trial of Bazaine, Bourbaki thus expressed himself: "The moment I arrived at Tours I told the Government how useless I considered their efforts. I was the better judge, I said, because fighting was my profession; and they would add to the misfortunes of France by being beaten almost disgracefully."

Was Bourbaki, then, the only one whose profession was fighting? What of Chanzy,, Faidherbe, Jauréguiberry, Jaurès, Gougeard, De Sonis, De Colomb, Cremer, Clinchant, Lecointe, Derroja, Rebillard, Du Bessol, Borel, Billot, Seré de Rivières, Du Temple, Pallu de la Barrière, Penhoat, De Jévigny, Saussier, Denfert-Rochereau—all the generals and admirals who fought, not only with the valour of the soldier, but with the faith of a leader? And can it be said that the troubles of France were increased by those who, though not soldiers by profession, placed their hearts' blood at the disposal of France—Cathelineau, Bouillé, Charette?

But at Sedan and Metz we were bereft of many officers, and

Gambetta complained that the new officers were inadequate in numbers and had no power over their men. In a decree of January 16 he taxed them with not living the soldier's life as much as they should.

The troops fought bravely enough, but had neither the endurance nor the hardihood that time alone can give. Gambetta thought they were lacking in strength and staying-power; he likened them to a hastily made piece of clockwork that will only act once, and must be wound up and set going again at regular intervals. Old regiments were very scarce. Individual courage does not take the place of collective strength, which nothing but time can produce. Victories are won in times of peace as much as in war. After Sedan our superiority in numbers was sometimes enormous, as at Beaune-la-Rolande, where we were six to one; but we had none of the previous training and organisation, nor yet the able leadership, that constituted the enemy's strength. "If," said Bismarck to Jules Favre, "you could make a soldier by arming an ordinary citizen, it would be folly to devote the greater part of the public funds to the maintenance of a standing army. In that lies the real advantage, and you are defeated because you failed to recognise it."

And yet—and yet—in spite of all these disadvantages, France was not without her victories in those days, and her arms were not altogether inglorious at Coulmiers, at Châteaudun, at St. Quentin, at Josnes, at Vendôme, at Pont-Noyelles, at Bapaume, and at Villersexel! And of the defence of Belfort and other fortified towns she may well be proud!

These successes, moreover, were won in spite of the evil fate that dogged us so relentlessly, and turned every opportunity into a mishap: the capitulation of Bazaine at a time when only a few days' delay would have enabled the Army of the Loire to raise the blockade of Paris before the arrival of Prince Frederick-Charles; the blunders that nullified the victory at Coulmiers; the delays after that battle: the defeat at Orleans, which might have been avoided if the plans for the sortie had been entrusted to more than one balloon, and the news had arrived in time for the Army of the Loire to prepare

and concentrate its forces and all the army corps had made a determined advance simultaneously; the long delays of the eastern campaign in difficult country and a peculiarly hard winter; the deplorable terms of the armistice; the obligation of the delegates of the Government in Paris to subordinate everything to the deliverance of the capital; the disagreement between the Delegation and the Commander-in-Chief; and the intervention in critical moments of the civil authorities, though even they could not, at an hour's notice, supply the strategical science of a Moltke. And added to all these circumstances was the indifference of the European Powers, who only considered their immediate interests, and failed to see that by permitting the growth of an ambitious and greedy neighbour, intoxicated with success, they were making ready for themselves a most terrible awakening.

It would be easy enough to fill a pamphlet with the mistakes of the civil authorities. Indeed, it has been done. It cannot be maintained, as Gambetta maintained before the Committee of Inquiry of the National Assembly, that they did not interfere in the military operations; that is refuted by his own despatches and by M. de Freycinet's narrative. The interference was not always fortunate. It would be easy to adduce instances of excessive confidence, and even—why shrink from saying it?—of presumption. Richelieu at Arras refused to answer the marshals, when they asked him questions on matters outside his province. But, after all, if these men had been less assured of themselves, would they have achieved so much in so short a time? It is easy to blame them for their mistakes, and their political opponents have not failed to do so, but their mistakes should not blind impartial eyes to the greatness of their work. Posterity forgets the former, and remembers only the latter; but contemporaries stand too near to see clearly. Facts alone do not make history. In the physical world distance diminishes the apparent size of objects and men, but in the moral world it makes them bulk larger. History sees only the wide views and the great high roads. As time passes on its way the dust settles and the air clears. Moreover, the leaders of nations are not only what they are,

but also what they seem. Truth is not realism; truth is a compromise between the real and the ideal. A mere reproduction of the real may be a great injustice, nay, a betrayal. One feature may suffice for the portrait of a man, but it may, on the other hand, give a very inaccurate idea of him. A detail that gives one man's character in a single stroke is quite insignificant in another man. The kodak reproduces movements that the eye cannot see, and thereby destroys the harmony of the whole picture. But in the end the true outline of a man's character is revealed to the minds of the people. This is what Renan called the psychological miracle; and this synthetic reconstruction in the popular mind, far more than any analysis, produces a complete whole. The passing generations credit men with all that their own imagination, and hopes, and faith have brought to them; they kneel at the shrines of great memories: fame is a religion.

In any case, there are complaints that can be definitely met and refuted. It has been said, for instance, that Gambetta aspired to the office of dictator. It was he, on the contrary, who urged the election of an Assembly rather than the appointment of a Delegation at Tours. Up to the last moment he refused to leave Paris. And his first action, on reaching Tours, was to offer the Ministry of War to a soldier.

It has been asserted that the protraction of the war rendered the terms of peace more severe. Thiers, and several historians after him, maintained that if negotiations had followed immediately on Sedan, Lorraine might have been saved.[1] This contention is not supported by the facts.

Ever since 1814 Alsace and Lorraine had been the objects of Germany's desire: the war had no other aim. On August 21, twelve days before the capitulation at Sedan, the Cabinet issued an order, dated from Pont-à-Mousson and published in both languages, that the *arrondissements* of Sarrebourg, Château-Salins, Sarreguemines, Metz and Thionville should no longer be subject to the administrative authorities of Lorraine, but to those of Alsace. And it was careful to add that these districts were not, thenceforward, under the

[1] See M. de Lacombe in the *Correspondant* of June 10, 1903.

Les représentants de l'Alsace et de la Lorraine ont déposé, avant toute négociation de paix, sur le bureau de l'assemblée nationale une déclaration affirmant de la manière la plus formelle (au nom de ces provinces) leur volonté et leur droit de ~~ces provinces~~ de rester françaises.

Livrés au mépris de toute justice et par un odieux abus de la force à la domination de l'étranger, nous avons un dernier devoir à remplir :

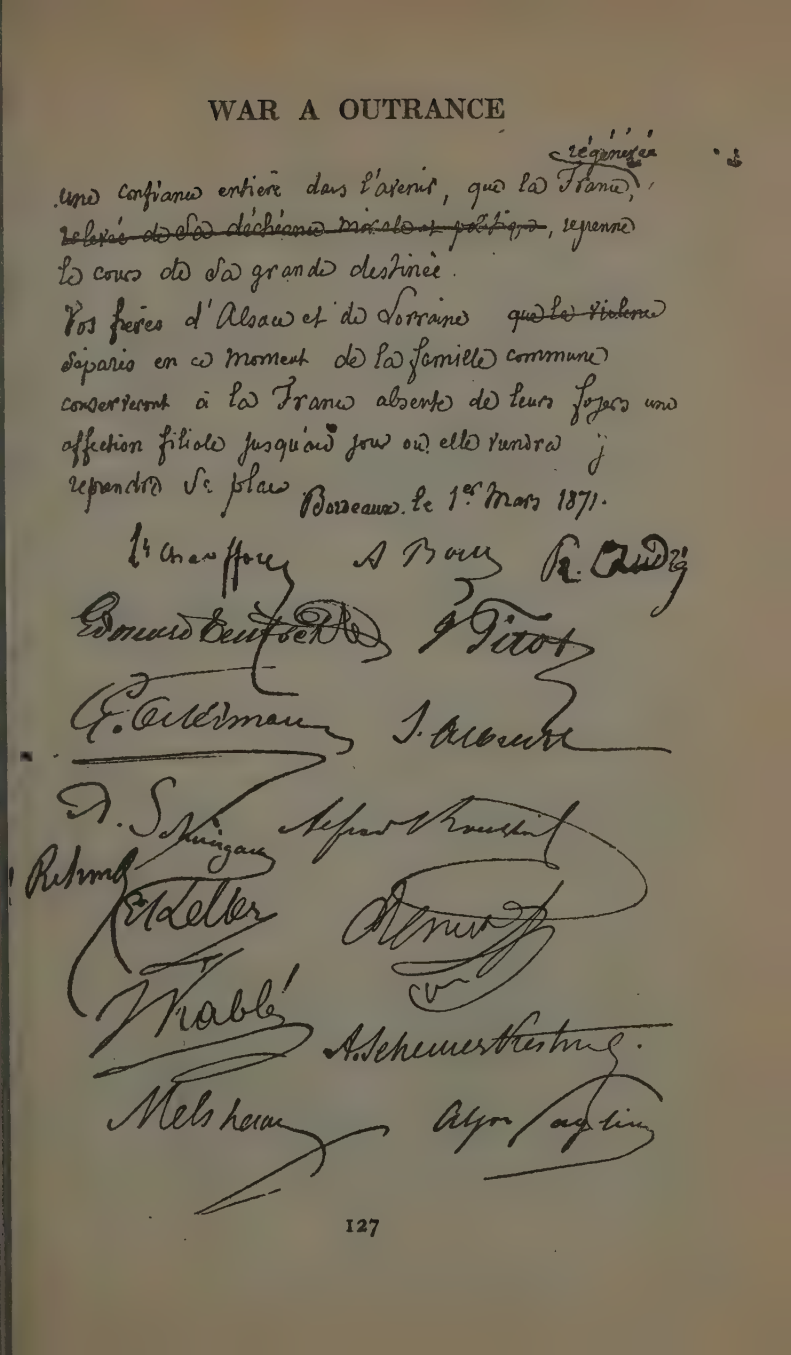
Nous déclarons encore une fois nul et non avenu un pacte qui dispose de nous sans notre consentement.

La revendication de nos droits nous reste à jamais ouverte à tous et à chacun dans la forme et dans la mesure que notre conscience nous dictera.

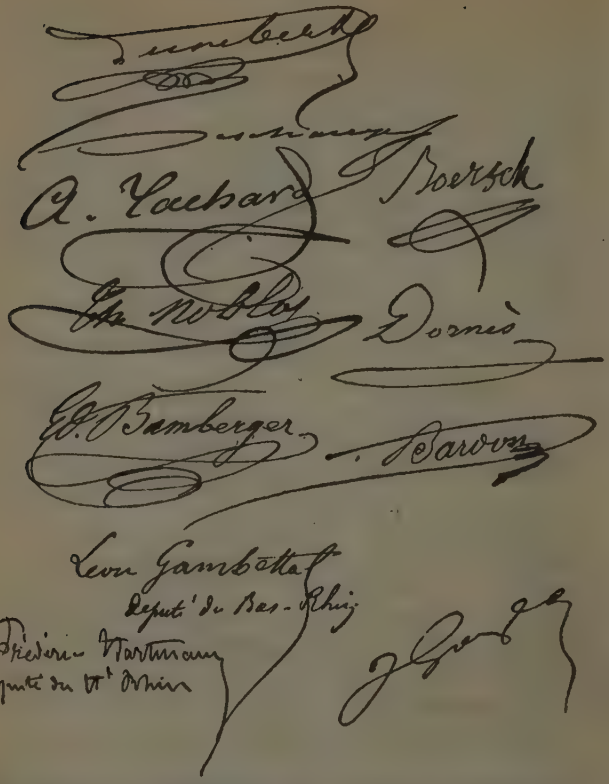
Avant (au moment) de quitter cette enceinte où notre dignité ne nous permet plus de siéger, et malgré l'amertume de notre douleur, la pensée suprême que nous tenons au fond de notre cœur est une pensée de reconnaissance pour ceux qui pendant six mois n'ont pas cessé de nous défendre et d'(inaliénable) attachement à la Patrie dont nous sommes violemment (inaliénable) séparés arrachés.

Nous vous suivrons de nos vœux et nous attendrons que

une confiance entière dans l'avenir, que la France régénérée
relevée de ses déchéances morales et politiques, reprendra
le cours de sa grande destinée.
Vos frères d'Alsace et de Lorraine que la violence
sépare en ce moment de la famille commune
conserveront à la France absente de leurs foyers une
affection filiale jusqu'au jour où elle viendra
reprendre sa place. Bordeaux. le 1er Mars 1871.



GAMBETTA



The representatives of Alsace and Lorraine, prior to all negotiations for peace, have laid before the National Assembly a manifesto expressing, in the most positive manner, in the name of these provinces, their desire and their right to remain French.

Thrust under a foreign yoke, in defiance of all justice and by a hateful abuse of power, we have a last duty to perform: we once more declare null and void the compact that disposes of us without our consent.

The vindication of our rights will always remain open to us, individually and collectively, in such form and degree as our conscience shall dictate. As we leave these precincts, where our dignity will not allow us to retain our seats, and in spite of the bitterness of our grief, the supreme thought that permeates every fibre of our being is a feeling of gratitude towards those who for ten months past have never wavered in our defence and of unswerving devotion to the country from which we are violently wrenched.

In our hearts we shall follow you, and with an entire confidence in the future, we shall wait until a regenerate France once more treads the path of her glorious destiny.

Your brethren of Alsace and Lorraine, severed for the time being from the great family, will maintain a filial love for the France that is absent from their homes, until the day when she shall come back there to resume her rightful place.

BORDEAUX, March 1, 1871.

sovereignty of the French Empire, in which respect they differed from those of Nancy, Toul, Lunéville and Briey—a clear indication that the former were to be kept and the latter restored. The new Governor-General, Bismarck-Bohlen, confirmed this arrangement in a proclamation dated from Haguenau on August 30.

On September 2 at Sedan, at a conference that preceded the capitulation, Bismarck declared that Prussia had a very definite intention of demanding Strasburg and Metz, Alsace, Lorraine and four thousand million francs.[1]

On September 7 the *Times* published this official despatch from Berlin: "A portion of Lorraine having been placed under the Prussian administration of Alsace, that administration now includes all the districts whose cession will probably be demanded by the Cabinet of Berlin on the conclusion of peace. . . . The territory demanded by Prussia, then, would include, in addition to the whole of Alsace, these districts of Lorraine: Sarrebourg, Sarreguemines, Metz, Thionville and Château-Salins."

On September 15 Bismarck traced the future frontier (the frontier of the Treaty of Frankfort) upon a map that hung on the wall of Senator Larabit's house at Buzancy. Simultaneously the same map was published in Berlin by the geographical and statistical department of the General Staff. This was the famous map "with the green border" which figured, in February, 1871, in the negotiations for the preliminaries of peace.

At the same moment Bismarck unmasked his batteries. On September 13 from Rheims, and on the 16th from Meaux, he issued circulars to the Prussian representatives abroad, informing them that Strasburg and Metz had been annexed, as being necessary for the safety of Germany.

On the 19th, at Ferrières, he demanded of Jules Favre, not only Alsace, but Sarrebourg, Château-Salins, Sarreguemines, Metz and Thionville. On September 27 and October 1 he informed the confederated princes and the German ambassa-

[1] See *Sedan*, by General de Wimpffen, p. 242; and *La journée de Sedan*, by General Ducrot, p. 62.

dors of these exactions; and on October 17 Jules Favre acknowledged the accuracy of his statements.

On November 1 Bismarck told Thiers at Versailles that he would have no elections in Alsace, nor in the German portion of Lorraine, and that the annexation of Alsace and Metz—which had fallen on October 27—was simply a question of safety for Germany.[1] He said to Gortschakoff on January 29: "We must keep to the programme we communicated to St. Petersburg five months ago. Its fulfilment is indispensable to our safety, and Germany would not tolerate for a moment that one iota of it should be changed. We must have Metz and Lorraine." He spoke in the same sense to Thiers on February 21 and 22, 1871.[2]

Thiers, then, seems to have founded his assertion that we could have obtained easier terms after Sedan on very slight evidence—on nothing more, indeed, than a word or two from Bismarck on November 4.

This is what passed between them.

Said Thiers: "If we offered to treat with you at once, what would you demand?"

"Alsace," answered Bismarck, "and *something inconsiderable round Metz.*"

"And what of Metz?"

"If you treat with us at once *I promise to do my best to persuade the King to restore it to you.*"[3]

That was all. Thiers' report of November 9 mentions no concession on the part of Bismarck.[4] Now the object of this interview was to procure an armistice, and it was to the interest of both parties to skate lightly over very thin ice. Bismarck had no desire to discuss the question of Metz that day.[5] It is not likely that he should have seriously contemplated surrendering Metz on the very morrow of its fall. He wished to gain time. As Chaudordy pointed out with his usual penetration, he preferred to postpone any definition of

[1] Thiers, *Notes et Souvenirs*, pp. 77, 79.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 115, 118.
[3] *Notes et Souvenirs*, pp. 95, 96.
[4] See the *Journal Officiel* of December 2nd.
[5] Busch, *Bismarck und seine Leute.*

his peace-terms "until the armistice was arranged, when it would be almost impossible to induce the country to resume hostilities."[1]

Thiers wrote his *Notes* at a later date, and they were published in 1903 without revision. After the incidents at Bordeaux, and his attack on Gambetta and the war *à outrance*, he had reason enough for trying to persuade the public—and indeed for persuading himself—that if his overtures had been successful he would have saved France from some of the concessions that were wrung from her.

There is no doubt that, at the Prussian Court, there were moments of hesitation on the subject of Metz. Now and then, after the war, Bismarck assumed a very innocent air: he would have had France regard him as a simple, well-meaning creature, whose hand was forced by the military party. William II., in the same way, said later on: "It was no wish of mine." But neither Bismarck, nor the King, nor Moltke, nor the General Staff, nor any German professor, or historian, or poet, or writer—from 1814, from Görres, Gagern and Gentz, to Becker and Arndt in 1840, and to the Liberals of 1843 (who further demanded Schleswig for Prussia and Lombardy for Austria), and to Ad. Schmidt, Adolph Wagner, Mommsen and the "young democratic party of the German universities" in 1870—nor any German who ever lived thought it possible to defeat France without annexing Alsace and Lorraine.

And there is one fact that has not been sufficiently emphasised by the historians who favour Gambetta and his Government. In September, 1870, it was Bismarck's opinion that Germany should annex the whole of Alsace, that is to say, the entire departments of Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin. The Gap of Belfort has always been considered very important from a strategical point of view, and the German military party, whom Bismarck used as a kind of screen behind which to establish his position firmly, by no means undervalued it. It may be regarded as certain, then, that the Germans would not have given up this territory if the prolongation of the war,

[1] *Enquête de l'Assemblée Nationale*, vol. II, p. 4.

due to Gambetta's exertions, had not enabled Colonel Denfert to hold Belfort until the war was over. The territory which the Prussians seem to have demanded and obtained in Lorraine, in the neighbourhood of Briey, would doubtless have been demanded by them in September, since the frontier traced on the map used at Versailles, when the preliminaries of peace were signed, was the same as that determined by the Treaty of Frankfort, and, as we have seen, this map was printed in Berlin in September, 1870. These facts refute Thiers' assertion to the National Assembly on June 29, 1871: "Had not the war been prolonged, we should have lost less territory."

Our resistance, then, improved rather than aggravated the conditions of peace. Above all, it made reparation possible in the future. A nation that is still rich and still powerful has no right to surrender any of her sons till all her resources are exhausted: she is pledged, to them and to her forefathers and to posterity, to shed the last drop of her blood in defence of her children. In the eyes of France there are greater things than success: there is duty, and there is honour. Gambetta, by assuming his splendid but terrible *rôle*, by keeping the flag flying to the very end, gave his country a last chance. His name will always be associated with the honour of the Republic and the faith of a patriot. A people to whom, after overwhelming disasters, heroic resistance was still possible, might hope great things for the future; and the organiser of the nation's defence will always be the personification of that great hope.

Even after the capitulation of Paris he wished to continue the war. This was what the Germans feared most: prolonged resistance. Gambetta was supported by Chanzy and Faidherbe. "Not only," said Chanzy, "do I believe that resistance is possible, but I think it could not fail to be successful if the country truly desired it and would accept all its obligations and consequences. We could obtain better terms if we showed ourselves quite determined to resume the struggle rather than submit to a humiliating peace." He then enumerated the country's resources: 222,000 infantry,

20,000 cavalry, 33,900 gunners, 1,232 pieces of ordnance, with 242 rounds of ammunition for each, 4,000 transport wagons; an unorganised reserve of 354,000 men in the territorial forces, the depots and Algeria; 132,000 recruits of the 1871 class; 12,000 horses that the remount department had promised to deliver in six weeks; 443 guns that had no carriages but were otherwise equipped, with 398,000 shells and 1,200 carriages in the arsenals; 98 batteries of 4, 7 and 12 guns furnished by the departments; while our factories were producing 25,000 *chassepots* a month and 2,000,000 cartridges a day, and arms and ammunition were arriving from abroad continuously. Moreover, we still had a rich country, with 25,000,000 inhabitants, wherein the enemy had not yet set his foot.

Chanzy's figures are nearly the same as those of the committee charged by the National Assembly to enumerate the military resources of France. This committee included Admiral Jauréguiberry, eight generals, three colonels and several retired officers.

Chanzy declared that in any case France must be prepared for war, since the only two alternatives were war *à outrance* or peace at any price; and those who desired peace would find war the only sure way of securing better terms.

France was rich—much richer than Germany—and she could pay for peace. She was too deeply disillusioned to go on fighting. Having grown used to conquest in the Crimea and in Italy, she could not recover from her surprise. The fall had been too swift and too immense. She was weary. The capitulation of Paris robbed her of her last hope: she could do no more.

PART III

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REPUBLIC

(1871–1875)

CHAPTER IX

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Gambetta Elected by Ten Departments—Spuller's Wise Advice—Gambetta's Speech at Bordeaux: Principles of Conduct—The Monarchists, to prove that the Assembly possesses the Constituent Authority, Vote for the Republic.

THE elections to the National Assembly began on February 8, 1871, and were carried out by departments and *au scrutin de liste*. The east, north and centre of France were occupied by 600,000 hostile troops, and were under the rule of German prefects; while 420,000 Frenchmen were prisoners in Germany. The number of Deputies was fixed at 768. Some of the candidates were elected by several constituencies: Thiers by twenty-six departments, and Gambetta by ten—Bas-Rhin, Bouches-du-Rhône, Haut-Rhin, Meurthe, Moselle, Seine, Seine-et-Oise, Var, Alger and Oran. His choice fell upon Bas-Rhin.

According to the terms of the armistice the Assembly was to "decide whether the war should be continued, or fix the conditions on which peace should be made." It was on this question, then, that the country voted. Paris and most of the towns, with Gambetta and the leaders of the Democratic party, were in favour of continuing the war; the country districts voted for peace. The parties hostile to the Empire—Legitimists, Orleanists and Republicans—who for twenty years had been repressed and excluded from public affairs, reappeared in the persons of their most eminent members. The Republican Deputies numbered about two hundred. The other two-thirds of the Assembly were composed of Legitimists and Orleanists, the latter being the more numerous. But there was no need to make any profession of political

faith: the electors chose their representatives chiefly for their social position, or their moral qualities, or because they were in favour of peace. At heart, the majority of the voters had two ruling passions: hatred of the Empire, which had engaged in the war, and hatred of the "Gambettist dictatorship," which favoured its continuance. These two points of view, while appearing almost identical, were leagues, and worlds, and centuries apart.

The Assembly met at Bordeaux on February 13. On the 16th it elected Jules Grévy as its President, in accordance with Thiers' advice.

Louis Philippe's former Minister, while writing the history of the First Empire, had not neglected to point out the mistakes of the second, and the dangers that threatened us. His speeches in 1866 and 1867 were prophetic; he had done his utmost to avoid the war; quite recently he had pleaded the cause of France with the Governments of Europe. His conduct in these matters had won oblivion for a political past which had often given food for comment. His age was seventy-three, but his activity and enthusiasm were only equalled by the lucidity of his mind and the youthfulness of his point of view. Even before he was placed at the head of affairs it seemed to be his natural position.

On the 17th a Declaration by the Deputies for Alsace-Lorraine was read by Keller, Deputy for Haut-Rhin. "Alsace and Lorraine vehemently protest against the cession of any territory. France cannot consent to it, Europe cannot sanction it. We shall regard as null and void all acts and treaties, votes and plebiscites, which favour the surrender to foreigners of all or of any part of our provinces. We declare that the right of Alsatians and Lorrainers to remain members of the French nation is for ever inviolable. And we swear, in our own name and in the name of our constituents, our children, and their descendants, to uphold this right to all time and by all means, in the face of all usurpers."

This moving protest was a cry of sheer pain, prompted by the purest patriotism. It would have been wise to let the matter rest there. To put the question to the vote was im-

prudent, since the Assembly could not associate itself with the protest without preventing the peace it was convoked to conclude, while on the other hand to refuse its adoption would be playing into the hands of the enemy.

And indeed when the Assembly declared Keller's motion to be urgent, Thiers at once intervened: "I share M. Keller's sentiments in every respect," he said; "but we must know how far we intend to back our words. Have the courage of your opinions: is it to be war or peace? Let us go to the bureaux and say at once what we think."

The Committee charged to discuss the motion produced the following resolution: "The National Assembly, while deeply sympathising with the sentiments expressed in the Declaration of M. Keller and his colleagues, has complete confidence in the wisdom and patriotism of the negotiators." Thenceforward Bismarck can have had no doubts with regard to the wishes of the Assembly, or the amount of resistance to be expected from our plenipotentiaries.

A few moments later the Assembly almost unanimously placed Thiers at the head of the executive power. "Of the French Republic" were the words added at his own request.

On the following day the extreme Left adopted an address declaring that neither "the National Assembly nor the entire French nation had the smallest right to make a single Alsatian or Lorrainer a subject of Prussia." This address was signed by Victor Hugo, Louis Blanc, Edgar Quinet, Victor Schælcher, Charles Floquet, Edouard Lockroy, Alphonse Peyrat, Sadi Carnot, Edmond Adam, Henri Brisson, Arthur Ranc—and Georges Clemenceau, who was destined to play so prominent a part in our history, and to be our representative on the great day of reckoning in 1918.

On the 19th Thiers laid before the Assembly the names of the new Cabinet: Dufaure, Jules Favre, Ernest Picard, Jules Simon, Pouyer-Quertier, De Larcy, Lambrecht, General Le Flô and Admiral Pothuau. While France was awaiting her fate there was a truce between parties. Thiers made an appeal to the whole House to work for the restoration of the country. "At this moment there is only one policy possible,

or even conceivable: to work for peace, to reorganise, to restore our credit and revive industry. This is a policy for which any sensible, honest, enlightened man may work worthily, whatever his views on the Monarchy or the Republic. When we have raised the stricken Titan we call France from the ground where she lies, and have healed her wounds, we will restore her to herself; when her mind is once more at liberty she will tell us how she would fain live." He then set out to Versailles, to negotiate with Bismarck.

On the 28th he returned with the preliminaries of peace. On March 1 Bamberger, Edgar Quinet, Victor Hugo, Louis Blanc, George, Brunet, Millière, Emmanuel Arago, Keller and Langlois spoke against the treaty. "If this thing that they call a treaty becomes an accomplished fact," cried Victor Hugo, "the peace of Europe will be at an end." "The surrender of Alsace-Lorraine," said Edgar Quinet, "means an endless war behind the mask of peace." Thiers, Vacherot and General Changarnier maintained that France was in a dilemma from which there was no escape. Buffet declared that four Deputies for the Vosges, in their sorrow at parting from their colleagues of Alsace-Lorraine, would abstain from voting. On an attempt being made by Conti to defend the Empire there was an outburst of agitation, and the Assembly almost unanimously voted the deposition of Napoleon III. and his dynasty, declaring him to be "responsible for the ruin, the invasion and the dismemberment of France." The treaty was adopted by 546 votes to 107. Twenty-three members abstained from voting.

Then Jules Grosjean, Deputy for the Haut-Rhin, read the immortal protest whose every word, for forty-four years, has been ceaselessly falling on our hearts as the earth falls on a coffin. Tears flowed freely as the representatives of Alsace-Lorraine left the hall. Gambetta resigned his position as Deputy for the Bas-Rhin. And that evening the Mayor of Strasburg, Küss, a Deputy for the Bas-Rhin, died at Bordeaux, broken-hearted. At his funeral Gambetta used these words: "By force we are being parted, but only for a time, from Alsace, the traditional cradle of French patriotism. Our

brethren of that unhappy country have done their duty nobly, and they, at least, have done it to the end. They must comfort themselves with the thought that France henceforward will have no policy but their deliverance! To achieve that result, Republicans must be closely united in one thought—the hope of a day of reckoning that shall be a protest of right and justice against force and infamy!" Cries of *Vive l'Alsace!* greeted this appeal.

The next day he set out for San Sebastian. He was ill, and worn out. "I am broken down," he wrote to a friend, "by all the troubles that have befallen us. Before the odious cession to the enemy which the Assembly has just sanctioned I can only retire; I shall wait for Republican France to find herself again."

Germany, in 1815, had mutilated our frontier by taking Sarrebrück, Saint-Jean, Sarrelouis and the coal-mines of the Sarre. This time she robbed us of Alsace, Metz, the iron-mines of the Moselle and a population of 1,597,228—thus depriving us of the power to initiate an offensive, and securing that advantage for herself. She further obtained the chief essential for her mineral-works, namely, iron (29,000,000 tons, which by 1913 had become 36,000,000 tons), with the hope of some day taking from us the mines of the Basin of Briey and Verdun; for with Germany every treaty is but a truce, or a stage on her onward journey, every frontier is merely provisional, every annexation paves the way for the next. Thiers had succeeded in saving Belfort, but the indemnity was fixed at five thousand million francs.

The Assembly of 1871 voted the preliminaries of peace with a knife at their throats, in order that their country's martyrdom might be curtailed and Paris saved from occupation by German troops. The Treaty of Frankfort, offspring of the criminal falsification of the Ems telegram, affected Europe like a poison for forty-four years, and brought untold torment to many a human soul.

It next became necessary to choose a place for the sittings of the Assembly. The majority were alarmed by the idea of

Paris, and on Thiers' suggestion the choice fell on Versailles.

At the same time he made a declaration of loyalty towards all parties. "I give you my word as a man of honour that when the country is reorganised not a single matter that has been temporarily set aside shall be altered through any disloyalty of ours." This was what is known as "the Pact of Bordeaux."

The Assembly was to meet at Versailles on March 20. On the 18th the rising of the Commune broke out. Gambetta's enemies have often blamed his inaction during the civil war, and spoken mockingly of "the orange-trees of San Sebastian." He was no longer a Deputy, and he was ill. And what, in any case, could he have done? Every possible attempt was made to reconcile the two camps, but all was in vain from the moment when the first blood was shed, and Generals Lecomte and Clément Thomas were killed. At first the Mayors, the Deputies for Paris, Colonel Langlois, Commandant of the National Guard, and after him Admiral Saisset, made every effort to prevent a rupture; and later on the *Ligue des droits de Paris,* with Schælcher, Edmond Adam, Ranc, Lockroy, Floquet and Clemenceau, tried in vain to intervene. If Gambetta had still been a Deputy during the Commune he would have remained in the hall of the Assembly with Louis Blanc, Edgar Quinet and Henri Martin. In March 20 the Deputies and Mayors of Paris made a final supreme effort to move the Central Committee. "You are insurgents," said Louis Blanc, "against an Assembly elected under conditions of the utmost freedom. We, who are regularly elected representatives, cannot have any dealings with insurgents. We would gladly prevent civil war, but we cannot appear as your associates before the eyes of France." During these terrible days one dominating idea inspired these great Republicans: they desired above all things to avoid a revolution in the presence of the enemy: they feared everything that would imperil the unity of the nation.

The excitement spread to Lyons, Saint-Etienne, Toulouse, Narbonne, Marseilles and Limoges. Many towns, in their agi-

tation, sent protests to Versailles against any attempt to restore the Monarchy. To save the country, they said, national unity must be preserved, and the sole means of preserving national unity was to preserve the Republic. Thiers went about repeating: "It is the form of government that divides us the least." On March 27 he said in the Assembly: "There are enemies of law and order who assert that we are preparing to overthrow the Republic. I absolutely deny it. I shall not destroy the form of government that I am now employing for the restoration of order." And he assured the representatives of the town-councils who came to tell him of their uneasiness that if a plot should be formed for the restoration of the Monarchy, he would take no part in it.

An attempt at co-operation between the elder and younger branches of the House of Bourbon was, however, being made under the auspices of Mgr. Dupanloup, Bishop of Orleans. In March, at Dreux, the Duc d'Aumale declared to the representatives of the Legitimist party that, if France desired a Monarchy, the Princes of Orleans would advance no claim to the throne, and that they were willing to be reconciled to the Comte de Chambord.

A series of hitherto unpublished letters, written from San Sebastian by Gambetta to Barthélemy, French Consul at Southampton, shows how great were his perplexity and distress.

March 26.—"What is to become of us? All this can only end in a catastrophe: the September massacres or the White Terror must soon be repeated, or perhaps both. There is only one possible means of saving the situation: to declare the Republic an established institution, to take the three or four radical measures that would give it free play, to pass an electoral law, dissolve the Assembly, and convoke a new Chamber in Paris, at the same time announcing in advance the legislative programme it proposed to carry out: then to return boldly to the capital and address the people in language worthy of France and of the population of the great city."

He puts his finger on one of the cruellest wounds inflicted by the defeat. "Not the least disgraceful feature of the

present situation is that all parties alike are trying to make capital out of the enemy's threats and demands. . . . Ah, how wretched we are!"

June 5.—"I am much perplexed with regard to the coming elections. My own feelings are still against being a member of an Assembly I regard as finished with, and as having exhausted its mandate. In any case I shall be obliged to explain my position."

June 14.—"I am entirely of your opinion: it is time to speak. As for the question of the legislative mandate, I am inclined to think that it would be best to refuse. I am expecting Spuller to-morrow. I must discuss the matter with him, and I will write to you my final decision. . . ."

Spuller's visit to San Sebastian took place, and Gambetta decided to return to public life.

Spuller, from his retreat at Sombernon in Côte-d'Or, had written to Gambetta at San Sebastian some letters of remarkable wisdom and clearness of vision. The Commune, he said, was doomed to failure. The Monarchy "would fall to pieces at the last moment." There was a great *rôle* to be filled, so great a *rôle* that it almost frightens me." "You are regarded as the right man to deal with a situation that cannot fail to result from this terrible crisis. . . . You are being kept for future needs." He urges him to make frequent speeches in the country, and to travel from town to town like English statesmen. "Until the Republic has been finally proclaimed and established, the proper *rôle* for you, it seems to me, is that of a republican O'Connell." What was needed was not so much a programme of reforms as a programme of conduct, a "declaration of the duties" of the Republican party. "It is you, more than anyone else, who must undertake the arduous task of uniting the party's scattered forces, of reviving hope and soothing resentment, of consoling the sorrowful and reconciling these two French peoples who are fighting one another." The Assembly was not constituent, it was true, but the sovereign power was vested in it. It would remain in authority, and one must act accordingly. When Thiers declared himself willing to maintain "the

accomplished fact of the Republic," he hurled the most bitter invectives at Gambetta and those who had prolonged the war. Their policy, he said on June 8, was that of "a raving maniac." "A raving maniac!" Alas, he was mad with love for France, for her honour and renown, mad with despair that she should be outraged and mutilated by the enemy! This was the climax of her sorrows, this hour when the greatest of her servants struck at one another above her bleeding heart! Spuller tried to heal Gambetta's wound by pointing out that Thiers had a very strong motive for a public attack on one section of the Republican party, since it enabled him to praise another section, and served as some extenuation of his present attitude in the eyes of the majority. In explaining the injustice he half excused it. The best answer to the insult would be some calm expression of confidence. "The more violently you have been treated, the easier it will be for you to be moderate; and the more moderate you are, the more certainly your plans will succeed."

He then points out to his friend the dangers of his absence. "Had you been present, this attack would not have occurred. The feelings that exist between you and M. Thiers would have been differently expressed, and that would have been better for everyone. It is not good for a man who has played the most brilliant part in contemporary history to have his actions and motives misrepresented for too long: the public soon forms a wrong opinion, which it takes a vast amount of pains to efface. Come back to the Chamber. When once you are there no one will ever dare to say, without fear of contradiction and criticism, that your policy of honour and courage was not the only course worthy of the Republic and of France."

These letters from Sombernon are greatly to Spuller's credit. And the seed fell on ground that had long been prepared to receive it. As appeared in his speech to the students in 1870, Gambetta was naturally inclined to these ideas. His speech at Bordeaux on June 26, 1871, gave fresh expression to them, and formed the starting-point of his new career.

He began with a reference to the plebiscite and all the

disasters that followed it. Did France desire, he asked, to forswear her privileges again, or to constitute herself a free country? The "raving maniac" agreed with Thiers that "authority should be in the hands of the wisest, the noblest, the most capable." He would fain transform universal suffrage, or the force of numbers, into a power enlightened by reason. The Revolution must be effected without violence, and the Republican party, hitherto accustomed to being in opposition and defiant of authority, must become the governing party. He called upon all parties, and upon the masses who were of no party, to support the Republic. Then he turned to those who held other views: "Do you wish to rule the Republic? Well, we ask only one thing of you—to recognise it first. When once you have recognised it, we shall be perfectly ready to admit you to the conduct of affairs." He expressed the social problem thus: "How is it possible that men whose only contact with society is exasperating to them, who only know it through effort and labour, and labour that is inadequately paid . . . should fail to be embittered by their poverty, and should not at last break out before the world in a fury of passion unspeakable? . . . There will be no peace and no order until all classes of society shall have been given a share in the benefits of civilisation and science, and can regard their Government as the legitimate offspring of their own sovereign power, rather than as an exacting and greedy master. Until that day, if we pursue our present fatal path, you will drive the ignorant to support *coups d'état* at one moment, and swell the forces of street rioters at the next, and we shall be left exposed to the pitiless fury of irresponsible mobs. . . . trying to avenge themselves by looting among the ruins . . ." And he quoted the words of Channing: "Societies are responsible for the catastrophes that occur within their borders, as ill-governed towns, where carrion is left to rot in the sun, are responsible for an outbreak of plague."

To the peasant he offered a meed of admiration. The blood and bones of France, he said, must be re-made. The reorganisation of the army was the first work to be accom-

plished. Military education should begin at school. Of the man of the future he said: "I would have him able, not only to think, read and reason, but also to act and fight. Everywhere we must have, side by side with the schoolmaster, the athlete and the military instructor." These two forms of education "must be carried on side by side. Otherwise your schools will turn out literary men, but never patriots. The whole world should be made to understand that when a French citizen is born, he is born a soldier. . . ." This was the Republican tradition, the tradition of the law passed by the Convention on the 27th of Brumaire, year III., which decreed that civil and military education should proceed hand in hand.

This appeal reassured the country and paved the way for the demonstration of July 2, 1871, which placed the Republic on a firm footing. There were 111 Deputies to be elected, of whom 21 were for the Department of the Seine. Forty-six departments were called upon to vote, and Gambetta, who was elected for the Seine, Var and Bouches-du-Rhône, chose to represent the Seine. Twenty-five departments had to find a substitute for Thiers, who had been elected for twenty-six constituencies and had chosen the Seine. Only three of the twenty-five were Conservatives.

It was at this moment that the Comte de Chambord arrived in France and announced his intentions with regard to the flag. On July 5 his manifesto appeared. "I shall not allow the standard of Henry IV., Francis I. and Joan of Arc to be torn from my hands. It flew above my cradle, its shadow must fall on my grave. Henry V. cannot surrender the flag of Henry IV."

Gambetta seized the first opportunity, after his return to the Assembly, to give his support to Thiers. When the Italians entered Rome a certain number of bishops had addressed petitions to the Assembly for the restoration of the Pope's temporal power. The Assembly nominated a committee who favoured this object. "The deed is done," said Thiers; "Italy is united; I am not the author of her unity, and there is no one who can be held less responsible than myself. We must not be forced into a policy that would end

in the very thing you are most anxious to avoid—a war When all Europe has to reckon with Italy, would you have me enter into relations with her that might compromise us in the future?" He added that he would defend the interests of religion and do his utmost to secure the independence of the Holy See. He accepted a resolution containing these words: "The Assembly, confident of the patriotism and prudence of the head of the executive power——" and at once Gambetta took the opportunity it offered him. "After such clear and decided statements concerning our relations with Italy and the Holy See, statements that have equal regard for their liberties, for the claims of conscience, and for the peace of Europe, we will gladly give our support to the resolution that has been accepted by the head of the executive power."

Then Keller, representing the party of the Right, made this announcement: "From the moment that the resolution is also approved by M. Gambetta, its significance is changed," and he declared that his friends could no longer support it. Thiers sprang to his feet. "I seek no man's support," he said, "but neither do I refuse it when it is offered to me. You would be setting a disastrous example, and one that would lead to perpetual discord in the country, if you were, virtually, to make this statement: 'Since our colleague So-and-So, with whose sentiments we do not at this moment agree, accepts the same form of words as ourselves, we will have none of it.'" He deeply regretted that M. Keller should have allowed such unfortunate words to escape him, for, said he, "if Discord had a voice, those are the words she would use."

The Assembly passed the vote of confidence, but returned the petitions to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Jules Favre resigned, and was replaced by Charles de Rémusat.

The Vicomte de Meaux, a Legitimist member of the National Assembly and Montalembert's son-in-law, who left some very valuable *Souvenirs* of the years 1871–1877, gives us his view of this first encounter between Thiers and the Right. "The bishops asked the Assembly to pass a resolu-

tion that would have embroiled us with Italy; some measure—I do not know what, and no more did they—in favour of the Pope's temporal power. What could M. Thiers do, and what could any of us do at that time? Did the bishops wish to provoke a quarrel with Italy, which Germany would certainly have encouraged? Assuredly they did not; and when they protested their peaceable intentions they were as sincere as they were illogical. But they did not feel themselves responsible for the country at large; and, without inquiring whether they were pushing us over a precipice or forcing us into a retreat, they were content to satisfy themselves and their immediate circle."

On August 12 Thiers' friend Rivet proposed this motion: "M. Thiers will fulfil, under the title of President of the Republic, the functions that were assigned to him by the Decree of February 17 last. He will hold this office for three years. . . ." Gambetta, in the bureaux,[1] opposed this motion. He held that the true cause of the country's disquiet was the divisions in the Chamber: the remedy, in his opinion, lay in a Constituent Assembly.

Rivet's motion gave the Assembly an opportunity to declare itself constituent, and on August 28 the committee laid this resolution before the Chamber: "The National Assembly, considering that it has a right to use the constituent power, an essential attribute of the sovereignty with which it is invested, hereby decrees: 'The head of the executive power will assume the title of President of the French Republic, and will continue to exercise, under the authority of the National Assembly until its labours shall be at an end, the functions assigned to him by the Decree of February 17, 1871. . . .'"

Rivet's motion, then, was amended in one essential matter: Thiers' powers, instead of being limited to three years, were to end only with the dissolution of the Assembly. Gambetta and his friends were placed in a dilemma: to adopt the resolution was to recognise the right of the Monarchist majority to settle the destiny of the country, to reject it was to increase

[1] *i.e.*, the offices in which committees of the Assembly meet.—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

the difficulties of Thiers' position. Gambetta, to whom the restoration of royalty was the worst thing that could happen, opposed the assumption of the constituent power by the Assembly. "It was only elected," he said, "to rid us of the invader. When a form of government is to be established, whether it be a Monarchy or a Republic, the chief aim of those who have to found it is to build a fortress that can be defended against any malcontents who attack it, rather than a tent or shed that is open to all the winds of heaven and can be overturned by any passer-by. That is what you will be doing if you draw up a Constitution in your present state of incompetence. I am regarding the matter from the monarchical point of view as much as from the Republican." And he went so far as to use these rather bold words: "If from this Assembly there should emanate a Republican Constitution I should not feel, I honestly declare, sufficiently strongly armed to deal a blow at anyone who dared to attack it."

This statement, to which later events so strikingly gave the lie, had an effect that the speaker was far from anticipating: it reconciled the Right with Thiers, and won them to the cause of the Republic, for the Monarchists, in their anxiety to show they possessed the constituent power, set up, at least provisionally, the form of government they dreaded the most. By 434 votes to 225 the Assembly declared itself constituent; by 491 votes to 94 it endowed the head of the executive power with the title of President of the French Republic. Thiers, in expressing his gratitude, drove the nail home: "The honour that the Assembly has done me in appointing me first magistrate of the Republic——"

Thus, by a curious paradox, the Left, who repudiated the constituent power, believed that Rivet's motion, as soon as it was adopted, would have the force of a constitutional law; while the Right, who were so vociferously demanding the constituent power, considered themselves to be passing an ordinary bill—nay, a mere resolution that could easily be revoked. There may have been some, perhaps, who were not averse from the idea of saddling the Republic with the responsibility of the Peace Treaty. Those who had opposed the

measure rejoiced in its adoption, those who voted for it were dissatisfied. Those who desired the restoration of the Monarchy were strengthening Thiers' hands and setting the Republic on a firm basis. Gambetta and his friends were clamouring for the dissolution of an Assembly that was destined to give them, after a few years of struggle, an established Government of the form they desired. This Chamber, to which they would fain have denied the constituent power, was in the end—prompted and inspired by them—to give France her Republican Constitution. But there was a profound reason for this paradox: the divisions among the Monarchists, and the mutual hatred that kept them apart. The Comte de Chambord, in shattering his crown, shattered with the same blow the younger branch of his House: he avenged himself for 1830. The Monarchists were obliged to choose one among several possible sovereigns, whereas the Republic, being an impersonal Government, could change its form if necessary and adapt itself to every circumstance.

CHAPTER X

THE NEW REPUBLIC

La République Française established—A Political Campaign—Gambetta and the Army Bill—Speech at Versailles (June 24th)—Journey to Savoy and Dauphiné: "A new social *stratum*"—The Duc de Broglie.

TOWARDS the end of 1871 a dream that had long been cherished by Gambetta was at last fulfilled. As early as the year 1868 he had discussed, with Lavertujon and Spuller, a scheme for starting a newspaper. Dubochet, the owner of the Château des Crêtes, was to supply the funds for the initial outlay. The paper was to be called *Le Suffrage universel*. During his visit to San Sebastian he referred to the scheme in his letters to Barthélemy. At last, in November, 1871, with the help of his friends Arnaud de l'Ariège, Dorian, and that fine spirit Scheurer-Kestner, he produced *La République française*. Challemel-Lacour—whose talents increased with every year that passed—Spuller, Ranc, Dionys Ordinaire, Charles Floquet, and Gaston Thomson were to write on the subject of domestic policy; Antonin Proust, Gabrial Hanotaux, Camille Barrière and Marcellin Pellet on foreign affairs; Allain Targé on finance, Freycinet on war and public works, Paul Bert on public education, Berthelot on science, and Lannelongue and Broca on hygiene and medicine. Gustave Isambert was the editor. Joseph Reinach began his career in this paper, and later on Albert Grodet contributed to it. The aim of the founder was to make *La République française* an organ and a nursery of the Government. It was an educative paper, moderate and serious in character, and its leading articles gave the Republican Party

their cue. Nearly every evening Gambetta visited the office, and in the course of conversation conveyed to his friends, in a rough form, the principal features of the articles that were to appear. One of his colleagues gives us a picture of Gambetta in an almost unknown aspect—revising the first page, welcoming with genial charm the help, and even the advice, of the humblest and youngest writers, describing to his editors the sittings of the Assembly, and then writing a letter on a corner of the table. "It was an indescribable force, a focus; there is nothing to be compared with it!"

He asked the help of his Alsatian friends. He wrote to the men who had formerly represented Alsace-Lorraine in the National Assembly: "Until we have restored to France the territory that belongs to her, we have no right to feel satisfied. I am firmly persuaded of that." The publication of the paper was announced in Alsace-Lorraine by means of a circular. "I wish to make it a platform from which the whole of Europe may hear us clamouring, day by day, for our rights and our stolen provinces. France is at the mercy of Germany. We are in a state of *latent* war; neither peace, nor liberty, nor progress is possible in Europe."

At the same time he engaged in a republican and patriotic crusade all over the country. He undertook the education of the masses. His progress, amid enthusiastic crowds, was marked by one successful skirmish after another. He prophesied the coming triumph of the Republic, hinted that France would some day be avenged, left hope behind him everywhere, and with his ardent words created the new democracy as miraculously as he had created armies.

On November 16 he spoke at St. Quentin, to celebrate the anniversary of the town's defence and to honour the memory of those who fell there: "What was lacking," he said, "was what all nations lack when they have allowed themselves to be kept too long in servitude—faith in themselves and sufficient hatred for the enemy. France must resume her true *rôle* in the world. Let us never speak of the enemy without making it plainly understood that we are always thinking of him.

Then some day our turn will come." He explained what he meant by *laicisation*: respect for liberty of conscience. The Church teaches faith; the school should teach scientific methods. He tried to win the country clergy, of whom he spoke with feeling and respect. (The distinction between the clergy of the people and the clergy of the aristocracy, and between the secular and the regular clergy, was a subject as often on his lips as it had been on those of Mirabeau.) Finally he demanded that France should be free to dispose of herself, and he called upon the whole nation, after the series of disasters that monarchical governments had brought upon it, to support the Republic. "It may perhaps be granted us—I cannot refrain from expressing this hope even on so sad an occasion—to have a share, together with all our fellow-citizens, in the founding of the great national Republican Party, whose sole ambition is to seal the union of the whole French people by the recognition and amalgamation of the rights of all. Then the nation, being united and free, can gather up all its forces, and, turning its attention to Europe, can exact the restoration of its property and the place that is its due."

The Assembly, being disappointed by the failure of the coalition, and disturbed by the progress of the Republican Party, was more than ever divided, yet hesitated to break with Thiers, whose sympathies were growing more and more Republican. "Believe me," he said, "you who wish to make trial of a Republic,—as you are right in wishing,—you must make it loyal. I am speaking especially to those to whom the Republic is a constant subject of thought, and I am one of them." (December 26.) A few days later, on January 7, 1872, twelve out of seventeen local elections resulted in Republican returns.

On January 20 Thiers, being defeated on a measure for taxing raw materials, handed in his resignation; but the Assembly, pointing out that a vote on an economic question could not be regarded as one of want of confidence, refused to accept it, and the President thereupon withdrew it. The Right were making ready for another possible crisis in connection with

the President's office. Negotiations were in progress, and the Comte de Paris had announced his willingness to visit the Comte de Chambord at Antwerp. The point at issue was the nomination of the Duc d'Aumale in place of Thiers. The Comte de Chambord took the matter very ill. On January 25 he made an attack on what he called "barren coalitions" in a new manifesto, and once more proclaimed his devotion to the white flag. "Nothing will shake my resolution," he declared, "nothing will wear out my patience, and no one, on any pretext whatever, will induce me to become the legitimate King of the Revolution." Thus, every time that the monarchists made any attempt at union and resurrection, the representative of the legitimate line replaced their tombstone firmly on their heads. The Bonapartists tried to profit by this occasion. On February 11 Rouher was elected in Corsica. He began an energetic propaganda in France, and created in the Assembly "a group in favour of appealing to the people."

The Assembly was prorogued on March 29 for three weeks. During the vacation Gambetta visited Angers and Havre in response to invitations from the Republicans of those towns.

Speaking at Angers on April 7, in the heart of a district that had returned Royalist Deputies, he tried to reassure the people, and inspire them with confidence in the wisdom of the Republican Party. To those who made distinctions between Paris and the provinces, he preached the importance of unity. He laid stress on the divisions that existed in the Right, while the Republican Party, on the contrary, was supporting the established Government, and devoting itself to the highest interests of the nation and the maintenance of peace and order. The minority in the Assembly was the majority in the country at large. The speaker proceeded to uphold respect for property, liberty of conscience, and religious liberty; and ended with this graceful allusion to the President of the Republic: "He knows that there is a finer thing than having written the annals of the French Revolution, and that is to accomplish it."

At Havre, on April 18, he said: "If, amid our misfortunes,

the Republican form of government has appeared the only one possible, it is because no other was in a position to confront the danger. At the time of the catastrophe there was no thought of any other Government. Where were the claimants to the throne?". He returned to the problem of education. The State can have no kind of authority nor power in matters of dogma and philosophical doctrine. It must know nothing of such things, or it will become arbitrary. When he was mockingly described as a commercial traveller, a *commis voyageur*, he accepted the title proudly. "That is true enough," he said. "I travel for the democracy: I hold a commission from the people. If I believe any Government but a Republic to be fatal for my country it is my bounden duty to say so! That is my mission! I will fulfil it, come what may!"

Incidentally he let a word drop which led to much argument. "Never let us deny the poverty and suffering of a section of the democracy. But let us also beware of the Utopias of those who believe that a panacea or a formula can make the world happy. There is no social remedy, because there is not one social question, but a whole series of problems to be solved and difficulties are to be overcome. These problems must be solved one by one and not by means of any single formula. There is no panacea." He did not say: "There is *no* social question." He said: "There is not *one* social question"—not a single social question, nor a single solution. His formulæ must be thoughtfully considered: they are composed with a care that amounts to an art. They may lead one astray. Even Challemel-Lacour misunderstood him in this case, and was amazed that his friend, who had defined the social question in such moving terms at Bordeaux, should now, to all appearance, deny its existence. Louis Blanc made the same mistake, and protested with some vigour. This, no doubt, was exactly what Gambetta desired: to oppose the Socialists without cutting off communications with them. He seized his opportunity. *La République française* published an answer to Louis Blanc, whom Gambetta at heart disliked, as became more apparent later. Louis Blanc was right when

he said there was a social problem, the problem of the relations between capital and labour. But this problem involves a host of others, and Gambetta affirmed an equally obvious truth when he said that there was no remedy, no panacea.

Finally he urged that a new Assembly should be convoked in Paris, "Paris, the cradle of our civilisation, the buckler of our public liberties, the teacher and guide of the national genius, Paris that may be made a mark for the imbecile hatred of a few rustic boors, but can never be downtrodden nor dishonoured." He asked for the support of the new converts. "It has been said that our party is closed to newcomers. It is not true!" Thus, while breaking away from the socialists, he identified himself at the same moment with the reconciliation with Paris. And he proclaimed the Republic open to all.

On May 9 a great number of Alsatians came to present him with a bronze. "Tenacity is one of the characteristics of your race," he said to them. "It is for that reason that our dear Alsace was especially necessary to French unity; it represented that unquenchable energy which exists among us, side by side with a fickleness and levity which at times, unfortunately, mar our national character. Until Alsace comes back into the family circle there will be no France and no Europe. Let us not speak of revenge,[1] let us utter no rash word, let us think over the matter calmly and soberly. For my part, I have no other ambition than faithfully to observe the mandate you have given me, a mandate that I look upon as my greatest honour, the ruling principle of my life." He continued to be the representative and the mouthpiece of the exiled provinces.

The Assembly met again on April 22. The Right aimed at compromising Gambetta by a debate on war contracts. Members had already talked loudly of scandals in connection with these contracts, and some startling disclosures were expected. Rouher launched out into an attack on the National Defence Government and a defence of the Empire. The Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier replied to him in ringing tones:

[1] *Revanche*, as applied to the Franco-Prussian quarrel, has various shades of meaning according to the context; sometimes it merely means "return match," at other times "revenge," "retribution," or "requital."—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

"'Varus, give us back our legions!'[1] Give us back the glory that was our fathers'! Give us back our provinces!" "Mexico has you in its grip," cried Gambetta. "Mexico is dogging your heels. Mexico, through the eternal Nemesis of events, has already wreaked a just vengeance on all who have risked the honour and the greatness of their country in that nefarious enterprise!" Among all the contracts of September 4 the only one that gave rise to serious comment was a purchase of guns in America by the "Survey Commission." Gambetta shielded the Commission; some letters incriminating the lieutenant-colonel who was its president were read out to the House, and the Assembly sent back the report to the Ministers concerned in the matter. The attack had missed fire.

Throughout these lively debates, Thiers was carrying on the negotiations for the evacuation of the occupied territory and the vote on the new army bill. France's rapid recovery had begun to inspire the Emperor William and Bismarck with misgivings. The Comte de Gontaut-Biron, our ambassador in Berlin, wrote: "The preparations for our army bill, the threats of revenge that seem likely to materialise through Gambetta's activities, and the rumours of an understanding between him and Thiers for the reorganisation of the army have created a profound and disturbing impression on the Emperor's mind." Thiers wrote back in answer: "We want peace. As for our so-called *armements* ('armaments'); it is not correct French to describe them by that term." Then he set forth his aims as regards army reconstruction: no compulsory service, but a professional army; a reversion to the Act of 1832, which limited its effective strength to 400,000 men. He was compelled, however, to bow to the will of the Assembly, which, yielding in its turn to the pressure of public opinion, intended henceforth to summon to the colours all citizens capable of bearing arms. Thiers, fearing an aggression on Germany's part—the military clique were busily

[1] The Emperor Augustus, after the defeat of the Romans under Varus by the Germans under Arminius (Herrmann), is said to have exclaimed to the unfortunate general: "Varus, give me back my legions!"—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

whispering their schemes in the Emperor's ear, and Bismarck was beginning to growl—insisted on a five years' term of service, threatening to resign if this were not enforced. We should thus be enabled to call up two or three classes immediately on the outbreak of hostilities (we had as yet no reserves). On June 10 the Right tried to compass his downfall by voting an amendment which would reduce the term of service to four years. It was through Gambetta's support that the venerable statesman carried the day. The Assembly passed the five years' service clause, to the signal discomfiture of the German Government and General Staff. Gambetta shares with Thiers the credit of having reorganised our military system after 1870.

The discussion on the army bill had ended; the negotiations over the evacuation of our territory were nearing their close: the Right considered that the hour had struck for laying their terms before the President. A deputation of nine members: including the Duc Albert de Broglie, who had just returned to France from his post as ambassador in London, the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier and General Changarnier, proceeded to his house on June 20 and implored him "to rely on the Right as his mainstay in the fight against Radicalism." Thiers replied that he had not failed in his duty, that his Ministry, drawn from Republicans and Monarchists alike, had triumphed over the Commune, and that, having accepted the stewardship of the Republic, he would not be justified in opposing the election of Republican candidates. He added that the rifts within the Monarchist party made a restoration of the Monarchy impossible and that they must now accept as existing *de jure* a Republic which already existed *de facto*. "By wise enactments," he said, "let us entrust the legislative authority to two Chambers; let us invest the Upper House and the Executive with the power of dissolving, by a common agreement, the Chamber of Deputies: under these conditions, the Government will be strong enough to defy the leaders of the mob to do their worst." As for the Radicals, he expressed his disapproval of their principles and their campaign; he deplored Gambetta's attacks on the

Assembly. If the country voted for this party, it thereby gave proof of its desire to set the Republic on a firm foundation, by supporting those candidates who proclaimed their attachment to the institutions now in force. Moreover, the Assembly was the sovereign body; it could, if it thought fit to do so, declare for a Monarchy. "Seeing that you are in a majority, why don't you yourselves propose that the kingship be restored?" The "Council of Nine" issued a Report which wound up with the following words: "Regretting their inability to come to an understanding with the President of the Republic as to the proper form that a Conservative Republic should assume, the delegates were compelled to withdraw, but their views are unchanged, and they reserve the full right of upholding those opinions." It was a definite breach. One could feel that the storm was gathering. The Assembly was prorogued from August 3 to November 11. Gambetta, determined to make the most of this respite, went off to spread the gospel of the new Republic throughout the length and breadth of the country.

At Versailles, on June 24, he celebrated Hoche's birthday. Henceforth this became every year a sort of pilgrimage for the Republican party, at which Gambetta, the loyal guardian of the army, the inaugurator of its renewed greatness, and now in some indefinable way the mouthpiece of the nation in arms and the tribune of the soldiers, sought to imbue France with love for the flag and with the cult of discipline and of law. "A man's first duty is to fight for his country," he declared. Those who call him a demagogue may well ponder over these sermon-like trumpet-calls to military and patriotic duty. He sets up as a model the young hero who writes: "In this country you will have no peace or repose in the future without religious toleration." He went one better than upholding this principle with tongue and pen; he put it into practice. It was in his eyes the only real means of avoiding internal discord. To such men as he we must pay that supreme homage which Tacitus recommended in the case of great citizens—the homage, not of praise, but of faithful imitation. He preached further that after civil war we should let bygones be bygones,

reminding his hearers how Hoche had proclaimed an amnesty on the very day after his victory. The rules of politics are eternal, because they are based on morality; there can be no true, efficient, fruitful statesmanship where might violates, even if only for the moment, the laws of justice and humanity.

On July 14, at La Ferté-sous-Jouarre: "The unity that was attained on July 14, 1789, must be restored. Every effort has been made to sow divisions between peasant and artisan, between artisan and *bourgeois*; these elements must once more be welded together." He urges the Republicans to exhibit their principles in the full light of day: "Let your fields, your religious festivals, your meetings, your markets, your fairs, serve as opportunities for political discussion and education."

To the workers of the Loire Department: "Wherever there is a French mother, she should bring up her children to show a religious love for France. If there is anything to console us amid the sorrow and shame of our bereaved country, it is the thought that the mothers and the patriots of France will supply her future champions and avengers. But before we think of the future we must make sure of the present, and establish once and for all a Government founded on justice and equality, not an envious and grudging equality, but that equality of rights and duties which recognises no other distinctions between man and man than those arising from character, intelligence and energy in the battle of life."

At Chambéry, the Prefect having refused to authorise the banquet that had been arranged to celebrate the anniversary of the First Republic, Gambetta received the guests at his hotel in successive batches. Each of these constantly changing audiences was met with a fresh stream of eloquence. These days in Savoy remind us of that day in February, 1848, when, on the steps of the *Hotel de Ville*, Lamartine, for hours at a stretch, had confronted the successive waves of popular fury with all the resources of his clear intellect and dauntless courage. In the case of Gambetta, however, the crowd were willing listeners. "The Republic should not mean the privileged rule of a few; it should be a tool that all may handle."

He advocated caution and patience. "Let us shelve the discussion of theories and keep for the time being to questions of conduct, let us tend the Republic with all possible care while it is still in the bud, let us watch over the young tree with loving devotion."

Always he impresses them with the need for a sense of proportion. "Let us draw up a well-defined programme, let us put the most urgent problems in the forefront, not all at once, but one after another. We must learn not to get the threads entangled, or we shall risk losing everything." This is the golden rule of Descartes: "In order to solve difficulties the more readily, split them up into as many parts as is possible or necessary."

And always he harps upon the frontier: "France has seen a portion of her inheritance wrested from her; she must recover her loss. That is the work we have to do: let us think of it always, but speak of it—never!" Yet he did speak of it, for all that.

At Albertville he reverts to the religious question. "Go into your places of worship, believe, affirm, pray. What I demand is liberty, an equal liberty for you and for me, for my philosophy and for your religious beliefs. We are not the foes of religion; we want to see it set on a firm basis, free and inviolable."

At Grenoble, on September 26, in the course of a speech that was destined to have far-reaching effects and to produce its reactions in the Assembly, he hails the advent of democracy: "What do you expect? Even now, after five-and-forty years, certain sections of society cannot bring themselves to acquiesce, not merely in the Republic, but in the results it has entailed. And it is to this want of resolution in a considerable section of the French *bourgeoisie* that I attribute all that is flaccid, unstable and invertebrate in the politics of the day. We are really inclined to ask ourselves how these people can shut their eyes to a phenomenon that ought to be glaringly obvious. Have they not seen, since the fall of the Empire, the rise of a new generation, keenly intelligent, showing an aptitude for affairs and a proper regard for the rights of every

citizen? Have they not seen men of this stamp gaining an entry into municipal councils, raising themselves, step by step, into positions on the other elective councils of the country, claiming and making good their claim to play their part—an ever growing part—in the electoral contests? Have we not seen this working-class element carve their way into the political world? Is it not a sign of the times that the country, after testing several forms of government, now at last would fain apply to another social stratum in order to make a trial of the Republican form? Yes, I feel it in the air, it is coming, it is already here—that *new social stratum* which has had a share in political affairs for nearly eighteen months past, and which is certainly no whit inferior to its predecessors."

On September 29, at Thonon, a deputation of Alsace-Lorrainers came from Geneva to pay him their compliments. At this very moment, on the other side of the new frontier, our country's wounds were being ripped open by some painful incidents. It was decreed that after October 1 all Alsace-Lorrainers who had not chosen to remain French citizens should be regarded as Germans, and that all who made that choice should be compelled to leave the country. Then began a pitiable exodus: during the second fortnight of September, nearly 200,000 Alsace-Lorrainers migrated to France. Gambetta, heart-broken at these expulsions, which left the country entirely in the hands of Germans, tried to speak: "Ah, they never trafficked in their blood, those two beloved provinces: it was their children whose breasts were the first to be pierced! Noble provinces, always heart and soul for France, always looking towards her flag.—'Yes, we suffer,' they said, 'but it is for our country's sake that we suffer, the very life-blood of the nation courses through our veins! . . .' Gentlemen, I cannot go on, I cannot. . . . It is . . . those provinces . . ." and utterly spent, his voice choked with tears, he stopped, and flung himself into a seat. His hearers were deeply moved; the sob was more impressive than any speech could have been.

A member of the departmental council having said that if the kingship were restored in France, Savoy would unite her-

self with Switzerland, because "where liberty is, there is our country," the sensitive patriotism of Gambetta burst into angry flame. "It is well to weigh our words carefully when we speak of France's heritage. France, as you say with justice, will be all the more attractive when her destinies are controlled by all her citizens, and not swayed by the caprice of one. Yes, France in all her glory, France, under the auspices of the Republic, once more at the head of civilisation, offering to the world her legions of artists and workmen, of peasants, traders and professional men—yes, it is worth while to belong to such a France as that, and there is no man who would not then be proud to say, in his turn, 'I am a French citizen!' But there is another France that I cherish no less, another France just as dear to me—the France that has been vanquished, overwhelmed, humbled in the dust. Yes, I adore *that* France as a mother; it is to that France that we must sacrifice our lives, our love of self, our personal enjoyment; it is of that France that we must say, 'Where France is, there is our country!'" . . . . . .

At the very moment when the severance was becoming even wider and more cruel, the youthful orator, in all the fervour of his filial love, proclaimed with ever increasing energy his sacred ideals: French unity, eternal remembrance of the lost provinces, the religion of patriotism. He loved France passionately and tenderly, as one loves a living creature.

His growing successes made no little stir among the Monarchists. Above all, the phrase coined at Grenoble, "the new social stratum," caused much fluttering in the dovecotes. On October 10, the permanent committee of the Assembly proceeded to acquaint Thiers with their gloomy forebodings. The President replied that the speech in question was "deeply regrettable, ill-advised, very ill-advised. There are no class divisions in the nation. If any such theory had been put forward in Parliament, it would have been strenuously opposed by the Government." Thiers was wrong, or perhaps he misquoted intentionally. Gambetta in his Grenoble speech had not referred to "classes." He had always and everywhere scouted the idea of class divisions; before and after, he never

ceased to advocate the union of the proletariate and the middle class; he was ever anxious to effect a combination between artisan and *bourgeois,* peasant and townsman. What he had said was "a new social stratum." It was a fact, a fact that such men at Chateaubriand, Royer-Collard, De Serre, Montalembert, Tocqueville and Prevost-Paradol had long since proclaimed in far bolder language, a fact that has persisted throughout the whole of our history as a very law of our corporate life. We see, even in the Middle Ages, the emergence of an intermediate caste between the villeins and the nobles—the men of trades and crafts, the burgesses; then, the continual advance of this Third Estate, gaining in the sixteenth century an undisputed influence over the monarchy, reigning supreme under Louis XIV. in politics and in the army, in letters and in arts; finally, under the Revolution, seizing the reins of Government. Behind the Third Estate and below it we see another social layer, the one that under Louis XIV. provoked Fénelon, Vauban and Boisguillebert to cries of pain and revolt, those sons of grooms, coopers, stonemasons, lackeys and stable-hands, who were destined to win laurels for Revolutionary France on the battlefield and save her from the clutches of the European coalition. And when the vote by property qualification gave place to universal suffrage, which Guizot called a "dark and immeasurable ocean," how could this new force fail to thrust the popular element into the local councils and the political assemblies?

The son of a grocer at Cahors rising to be the administrative chief of France—is it not a downright scandal? In the eyes of the Parliamentary Right, it was something akin to the invasion of the Roman Empire by the barbarian hordes. Under Louis XIV. the Duc de Saint-Simon, furious at being a political nonentity and at witnessing the success of "men who did not count," like Colbert, secretly vented his wrath against "this long reign of the vile middle class."

Tocqueville had gone much further, as regards not only the advent of democracy but also the Concordat and the rights of property. Pretexts had to be found, however; nothing was exempt from attack. It was essential to drive Thiers into

a corner, by laying on him the blame for the growing diffusion of revolutionary and subversive doctrines. To the Right, the Republic was merely a recrudescence of the crises of 1793 and 1848, in more fixed and enduring form. They dreaded universal suffrage, although they themselves had been elected under that system, had appealed to it, and were destined in the end to preserve it: this vital contradiction proved a source of embarrassment and weakness for their party. Gambetta, on the other hand, did not kick down the ladder by which he himself had risen. Instead of seeking to rebuff the newcomers whom universal suffrage brought into public life, he gave them a warm welcome and did his utmost to enlighten them by his superior knowledge.

As soon as the House resumed its sittings on November 13, General Changarnier gave notice of a question to be asked by him concerning Gambetta's tour through Savoy and Dauphiné. The Assembly resolved that the debate should take place on the 18th.

The Duc Albert de Broglie had just left the London Embassy in order to lead the campaign against Thiers. He was now fifty-one years of age. A grandson of Madame de Staël and a son of the Minister who held office under the July Monarchy, he brought into the political arena all the resources of a varied and exquisite culture allied to an intellect of great natural keenness, a lofty pride and an indomitable courage. He had inherited, among other things, the virtues of his father, "sincerity of feeling, frankness of speech, and a contempt for the arts of winning popularity with the masses or favour among the great."[1] Like his father, too, he exhibited a certain shyness of manner, a certain native awkwardness, which drew around him a barrier of reserve. This shyness made him seem a trifle supercilious. He was charged with stiffness in intercourse; his friends called him absent-minded, and he was indeed absent-minded when it suited his purpose. He was far from inattentive to men and things that seemed

[1] From Albert de Broglie's foreword to his father's book, *Vues sur le gouvernement de la France.*

to merit his attention, but he did not concentrate on anything that seemed unworthy of the effort. His religious preceptor, X. Doudain, who really belonged in spirit to the eighteenth century, had no liking for the somewhat undemocratic Liberalism of the circles in which his pupil moved. Doudain had sounded him to the core, and had tried to warn him against developing an excessive conceit of himself and assuming an air of infallibility. He wrote to Albert de Broglie when the latter was a young man of twenty-four :" May God preserve you from pride, from vanity, from insolence, from scorn of your fellow-men, from being wedded eternally to your own opinions, from a mocking and dictatorial attitude, in short, from all the vices that intellectual superiority brings in its train, and especially from the worst vice of all, the vice of flattering yourself that you do not make others too conscious of your superiority. In a word, my dear son, I wish you what you can never attain." (July 22, 1845.)

The Duc Albert de Broglie had a distrust for democratic fickleness, which to his way of thinking did not harmonise with a policy of foreign alliances. He held that parliamentary government, void of all hereditary tradition, could not take firm root in our country, and that the elective principle was out of keeping with Presidential irresponsibility. He hit the mark when he observed that the form which the executive should take in a parliamentary republic and in a centralised State is the crucial problem. But, as regards the possible solutions, he proved more uncompromising than his father, who had foreseen the coming of parliamentary institutions, whether under a monarchical or under a republican régime. He had framed for himself a theory of French society and of the conditions necessary to its existence, and thought it beneath him to modify that theory in any particular. Imprisoned of his own free will in a world where social conventions rank so high and are the very keystone of the arch, he utterly ignored the stresses and surges of popular feeling; he would not admit that any reforms could be successful in France save those that had already gained a secure foothold among other nations, and even in monarchical

countries. Within certain narrow limits, he would have been a great Minister under an absolute or even a constitutional monarchy. He looked upon democracy as vulgar, and frankly told it so; democracy looked upon him as insolent, and told him so with equal frankness. He found balm for his wounds by honouring French literature and becoming an excellent historian. Whatever one's general views might be, the burning question of the hour was whether a revival of the kingship was feasible, and, seeing that this monarchist Assembly had no monarch at its head, whether France could be left in a perpetual state of interregnum.

CHAPTER XI

THE FALL OF THIERS: MARSHAL MacMAHON.

Effect of Gambetta's Speeches on the Assembly—The Barodet Election—Fall of Thiers—Marshal MacMahon's Presidency (May 24th, 1873)—Gambetta and the Marshal—Final Attempt to Restore the Monarchy.

In Thiers' opinion, the system under which France was then administered, namely, a single and sovereign Assembly with an executive drawn from its midst and responsible to it, could not last. A continuation of this system, he held, could be desired only by the extremists on either wing: by the extreme Left, because a single and sovereign Chamber was in keeping with its political doctrines; the extreme Right, because it hoped to find in the weakness of a provisional Government an opportunity for restoring the Monarchy. Thiers regarded it as his duty to warn the Assembly that by leaving behind it an administrative machinery in imperfect working order it was pursuing a course fraught with danger to the country. He thought that he was thereby aiding the cause of true Conservatism. It was not, we must confess, a revolutionary idea; but on the other hand it was not a step towards the monarchy, and hence to the Monarchists it spelt treason.

On November 13, 1872, he read out his message, the most important and decisive message of his Presidential career: "The Republic exists, it is the Government of the country by law established: to aim at any other form of government would be a fresh revolution, and the most appalling revolution of all. The country has entrusted you with the task of securing for it, in the first place, peace; after peace, order; with order, the recovery of its former power, and finally a regular Government. The last-named is the most momentous duty; and

when, on the date that you shall determine, you have selected from amongst you the men who are to consider the means of carrying it out—then, if you require our advice, we shall give it you loyally and without flinching." The Left were loud in their applause, but the Right gave vent to indignation, and proposed to nominate a committee of inquiry with reference to the message. Next day *La République française* issued the following comment: "Yesterday marks an epoch in the history of France. M. Thiers has cut the painter. He has broken with the Monarchy. He has proclaimed the Republic as the sole form of government that is henceforth suitable for our country. Happy the man who, at certain moments of his life, can thus act as interpreter for a whole nation! M. Thiers yesterday introduced our young Republic to old Europe."

On the 18th General Changarnier put his question on Gambetta's tour, entreating the President of the Republic to sever all connection with a firebrand who was ready to set the whole country by the ears. The Duc de Broglie asked the President to repeat the statements of policy he had made before the permanent committee. "It is an insult," replied Thiers, "to demand in this House that I should make a profession of faith, when forty years of political activity have made the world familiar with my principles. If anyone shows signs of distrusting me, I have a right to find out from the House whether I possess its confidence. I request that a vote may be taken forthwith."

Changarnier accused him of "senile ambition." "Yes," said Thiers in reply, "I feel offended, and with good reason. After all that I have done within the last two years, even a hint of distrust is, I make bold to say, an act of ingratitude. M. Gambetta may have been the ostensible target for this question, but in reality it was aimed at me." Then, instead of accepting a simple vote of confidence, he inserted the following amendment: "The Assembly, confident in the energy of the Government, and repudiating the doctrines voiced at the Grenoble banquet . . ." The extreme Left voted against the Government; a large section of the Left abstained from voting;

only 379 votes were recorded, 263 for the Government and 116 against. Thiers was cut off both from the Left and the Right; this was just what the Duc de Broglie wanted.

Thiers carried a resolution to appoint a committee of thirty members for the setting up of a proper administrative machinery. A vast number of petitions were organised throughout the country to request that the Assembly might be dissolved. A debate on these petitions was opened on December 14. Gambetta maintained that the Assembly had received only a limited mandate, that it was out of touch with public opinion, and that the electors should be consulted without delay. Dufaure, Keeper of the Seals, protested against these views, and declared that it rested with the Assembly alone to define its mandate. The Right, regarding this speech as an attempt to counteract the Presidential message, voted that it should be posted up all over the country. The position of Thiers between the cross-fires of Left and Right was becoming more and more difficult.

This complete change of front on the part of the Governmen. was mainly due to the external situation, to the frame of mind prevailing at Berlin. Gambetta's triumphal progress was a thorn in the flesh of the Berlin Government. The Comte de St. Vallier, the representative of the French Government attached to the Commander-in-Chief of the German Army, wrote: "M. Gambetta is still the chief bugbear: the very mention of his name is becoming more and more distasteful to them." In order to reassure Berlin, Thiers wrote back: "Gambetta will not be my successor. Things are moving towards democracy in France as all over Europe (and particularly in Germany, but not towards mob-rule."

At Versailles the Assembly made furious onslaughts on Gambetta and his friends. Challemel-Lacour, brought to book for the contracts granted at Lyons during the war, defended himself with scathing eloquence, and charged the Contract Commission with having set itself "to afford France pretexts for disparaging herself." The Assembly passed a vote of censure on the revolutionary acts of the Lyons city council, which had substituted the red banner for the national

flag. Challemel-Lacour had fought the city council at the peril of his life, so that this attack on the National Defence Government over the question of contracts led to a unanimous condemnation of the red flag.

Thiers, indefatigable as ever, wished to complete the liberation of the occupied territory; he had already shortened by two years the period anticipated. "I need not trouble about the rest," he remarked, "for as soon as the convention is signed the majority will declare, in a beautifully-worded decree, that I have deserved well of my country, and will then put me on the shelf."

On February 19, the committee proposed that the Assembly should not rise without having come to a decision regarding the machinery of the legislature and the executive, the creation of a Second Chamber, and the assignment of its functions and the electoral bill. The Orleanists, in view of the Comte de Chambord's unbending attitude, had parted company with the Legitimists; from now onwards they were to help in moulding the Republic. The Duc de Broglie, having been appointed to draw up a report, read out his report on the 21st. Questions of principle were for the time being set aside. They confined themselves to fettering the activities of Thiers. It was suggested that when he wanted to speak in the Assembly, he should ask the permission to do so through a message; the debate would be suspended and the President would be heard on the following day; the House would adjourn after the President's speech and the debate would be resumed at a later sitting, at which the President would not be present; questions would be addressed, not to the President, but to Ministers.

Gambetta condemned this "elaborate and futile ceremonial." In accordance with the Radical tenets of the day, he opposed the formation of a Second Chamber, "a Chamber of obstruction," "the outcome of an unnatural combination," "an everlasting cause of strife," "a breakwater against universal suffrage." Furthermore, pointing to the results of the by-elections, he once more demanded an appeal to the country.

The Duc de Broglie replied that the scheme of the Thirty did nothing towards solving the problem, "Republic or Monarchy?" Thiers endeavoured to restore the Government's balance between Left and Right. On March 13 the scheme, so far as its general lines were concerned, was adopted by 411 votes to 234. Every effort was made to muzzle the foremost orator of the Republic; but at the same time the Assembly, unintentionally, and in the hope that they were not committing themselves for the future, had begun to give statutory expression to Republican principles.

Three days later it was announced in an official note that the treaty for the evacuation of our territory had just been signed by Germany. The last milliard of the indemnity was to be paid in four equal instalments on June 5, July 5, August 5 and September 5, 1873. In return for this, the departments of the Vosges, the Ardennes, the Meuse, Meurthe-et-Moselle and Belfort were to be evacuated from July 1, the evacuation not to take longer than four weeks. Verdun alone, as a pledge for the two instalments which would still have to be paid after July 28, would remain under occupation until September 5. The news was received with rapture all over the country.

Rémusat, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, read out the Treaty to the House. As soon as he had finished his statement the Left rose as one man, and after three rounds of cheering several of its members cried out over and over again, "Long live the Republic!" while "Long live France!" was shouted from the benches of the Right. The President of the Left Centre, Albert Christophle, put forward a resolution in the following terms: "The National Assembly declares that M. Thiers, President of the Republic, has deserved well of his country." The Right immediately moved a counter-resolution: "The Assembly, receiving with patriotic satisfaction the statement that has just been made to it, and glad to have thus accomplished a vital portion of its task, decrees a formal vote of thanks to M. Thiers, President of the Republic, and to the Government." In the end, after a not very edifying debate, a motion combining the two resolutions was

passed with only a few dissentient votes. Grévy, the President of the Chamber, rose and said: "I am fortunate in having to proclaim, by virtue of my office, this resolution of the Assembly. A nation displays true moral greatness when, showing a gratitude commensurate with the services rendered, it can proffer to the men who serve it a reward worthy both of the donors and the recipients." These words were received with thunderous applause by the Left.

A few days later, on April 1, the Right had its revenge. The presence of Grévy in the Speaker's chair was a stumbling-block that tended to thwart the designs of the Right against Thiers. A coup was arranged. In the course of a debate on a proposal to alter the constitution of the Lyons city council, Le Royer, after enumerating the main arguments of the Vicomte de Meaux's report, wound up with the comment: "That is the Commission's bag of tricks!" Vociferous clamours from the Right ensued. "A piece of impertinence!" cried the Marquis de Grammont. The President of the Chamber called him to order. The uproar grew louder than ever. Grévy offered to resign, and declared the proceedings closed. Next day, Grévy obtained 344 votes and Buffet 251. Grévy, although re-elected, persisted in his decision to resign, in spite of warnings from Thiers, who was not blind to the danger involved. A fresh ballot was taken, and Buffet was elected President of the Chamber by 304 votes to 285, the latter being given by the Left to Martel. "It was the first time," observed the Comte de Meaux, "that the majority in the Assembly agreed upon an appointment that was a direct challenge to M. Thiers; this agreement presaged his fall, M. Buffet being used as a weapon to strike him down. Without Buffet, the attack that was to overthrow Thiers would have had no chance of success, and it was, no doubt, with this idea in his mind that the Duc de Broglie had pressed for the election."

On the following day these incidents were a topic of discussion at the Cabinet council. Jules Simon said to the President, in a bantering tone: "You see now, your work is done; you must sing your *nunc dimittis*." "But they haven't

got anyone," Thiers objected. "Oh, yes, they've got Marshal MacMahon." "MacMahon? I can answer for *him*—he'll never accept!"

The House adjourned from April 7 to May 10. By-elections were due for April 27, notably in Paris. Thiers pushed Rémusat's candidature; he felt sure that on the morrow of the treaty that secured the liberation of our territory the capital would give him proof of its gratitude. Many Republicans however, were in angry mood: Lyons found itself shorn of its municipal liberties by a recent vote of the Assembly: and to read the Assembly a lesson, they backed the candidature of Barodet, a former Mayor of Lyons, who had once been a schoolmaster.

The party was divided. The Left and the Centre supported the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Grévy took the same line. Gambetta, anxious not to split up his left wing, also declared for Barodet. His intervention turned the scale. His friends, with Louis Blanc, addressed the Paris electors in a proclamation which stigmatised Rémusat as the "official" candidate and urged them to vote for his rival. The Right put forward Colonel Stoffel. Thiers was caught between two fires. Barodet got in by 180,045 votes, as against 135,028 for Rémusat and 26,644 for Stoffel, while 11,290 electors did not go to the polls.

Ranc, in his book *De Bordeaux à Versailles*, maintains that the fall of Thiers was a foregone conclusion before the election. This is true; but the election furnished his opponents with a new pretext and helped to precipitate the crisis. As was only to be expected, the Right waxed eloquent over the weakness of the Government and the victory of mob-rule. They decided to bring matters to a climax. On May 17, the Ducs de Broglie, d'Audiffret-Pasquier and Decazes paid a visit to the Duc d'Aumale, asking him to stand for the Presidency of the Republic. On the following day, however, a meeting, attended by certain members of the Right, was held at the Duc de Broglie's house, and Lucien Brun, speaking on behalf of the Legitimists, raised objections. The Duc de

Broglie admitted the force of their arguments, and, owing to this unforeseen hitch, Marshal MacMahon was accepted as candidate. (This incident formed the subject of a correspondence in 1903 between M. Hanotaux and one of the Duc d'Aumale's executors.)

The Assembly resumed its sittings in the full flush of the excitement caused by the Paris election. Thiers made the famous speech in which he said, in reply to the Duc de Broglie, who had taunted him with sheltering under the wing of the Radicals: "And you, you will shelter under the wing of a protector from whom your father, the old Duc de Broglie, would have recoiled in horror: you will shelter under the wing of the Empire!" The vote of censure having been passed by 360 ayes to 344 noes, Thiers and his Cabinet tendered their resignation. The Assembly at once appointed Marshal MacMahon as his successor.

Thiers had fallen; but, thanks to him, France was already set on her feet again. The Monarchists overturned him in the hope of steering clear of the Republic, yet they themselves were to give France a Republican constitution.

Marshal MacMahon, in his inaugural message, promised on his word of honour as a soldier to show deference to existing institutions. He entrusted the Duc de Broglie with the task of forming the Cabinet. (May 25.)

Scarcely had the House reassembled when Gambetta flourished before it a confidential despatch from the Home Secretary to the departmental Prefects, asking them for a report on such newspapers as were Conservative or might come over to the Conservative side, their financial standing, what consideration they would expect for a whole-hearted support of the Government, and so forth. As the Right broke in with noisy interruptions, Gambetta thundered out: "You have been charged with sheltering under the wing of the Empire—why, you are taking a leaf out of its book!"

On June 24, the celebration of Hoche's birthday gave him

an opportunity of setting forth his attitude towards the new Government. By a clever touch, he deliberately ignored the Ministers and addressed his remarks to the eminent soldier, the incorruptible great man whom the Assembly had raised to the highest office in the Republic. He did not doubt MacMahon's word, he relied on his straightforwardness. He spoke in glowing terms of the Army, of its loyalty. He proceeded to point out that the working of the constitutional machine had enabled a new President to be appointed without any jolt or jar; that while the men were different, circumstances remained the same; that France had not changed her intentions, that the administrative functions had not changed their names, that the reign of law still prevailed; power had been transferred to other hands, but the order of things had not been altered, since power was impersonal.

Marshal MacMahon had always done justice to Gambetta's effort during the war. The Vicomte Emmanuel d'Harcourt, who had not left the Marshal's side at Sedan, nor even when they were prisoners at Wiesbaden, has remarked: "Whenever an opportunity offered, the Marshal stood up for Gambetta. On one occasion he wrote to him expressing 'my keen appreciation of your endeavours and my earnest wishes for your success.'"

Under the leadership of a soldier, France was now for the first time to embark upon the experiment of a parliamentary Republic. Thiers, in virtue of the powers confided to him, had directed affairs in person from his place in the House; Marshal MacMahon, outside the Assembly, was to act up to the maxim: "The President presides, but does not govern." The Republic was to change its character, and to exhibit that pliancy, that elasticity which had recently been claimed for it by Gambetta at the Versailles banquet.

On August 5, 1873, Nancy, for two years past the headquarters of the German army of occupation, was delivered from its thraldom. General von Manteuffel issued marching orders to his troops, and amid scenes of indescribable emotion the French flag was once more flown from every window. By September 5, a year before the date at first assigned, France

had paid her indemnity to the uttermost farthing. On the 13th the Germans cleared out of Verdun, and on the 16th the last soldiers of the invading army crossed the new frontier. After three years of occupation, our territory was entirely free from the German yoke.

The Monarchists now put forth a final effort towards uniting the two branches of the Bourbon House. M. Gabriel Hanotaux, in his admirable book *Histoire de la France contemporaine,* has told the story of its curious ups and downs: the journey from Chesnelong to Frohsdorf, the illusions that were harboured and the ultimate defeat.

The Left, growing restive, began to marshal its forces. Thiers made overtures to Gambetta. At Périgord, on September 28, and at La Borde, near Châtellerault, on October 3, the latter called for a union of all Republicans, declaring that a reactionary policy would lead to the most appalling of revolutions.

On October 18, the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier, with the consent of the Duc de Broglie, revealed to the Right the draft of a resolution for the re-establishment of the Monarchy, with the Comte de Chambord and the tricolor. Everything was in readiness for the coming of the King: the costumes, the decorations, the carriages, the horses and their trappings, and the line of route. The Republicans protested more vigorously than ever. The deputies for the Seine department, Gambetta and his friends addressed a manifesto to the electors: "It is no longer a question merely of upholding a form of government, but of guarding those civil, political and religious liberties which our fathers have won and which are essential to the very existence of the Republic. Your representatives will stoutly oppose any measures likely to entrap the country into restoring a system that it profoundly disapproves."

On October 27, however, the Comte de Chambord wrote his famous letter to Chesnelong: "I am expected to sacrifice my honour. I have nothing to retract from what I have said in the past. It is the fashion to contrast the supple dexterity of

Henry V.[1] with the steadfast determination of Henry IV. I claim to be no whit inferior to him in this respect; but I should like to know what he would have said, before his decision to change sides, if some rash person had urged him to disown the principles for which he fought at Arques and at Ivry! I mean to stick to my guns, without swerving an inch. . . ."

Glittering words! but Henry IV. would have spoken to a very different tune. The letter drove members of the Right to despair, and gladdened the hearts of Republicans and Bonapartists. All seemed lost for the Monarchy. The Prince, however, did not give up hope. He took a clandestine trip to Versailles and asked for an interview with the Marshal, but met with a polite and dignified refusal. The scion of kings, in his gloomy apartments at the Comte de Vanssay's house, waited in vain for a fresh turn of Fortune's wheel, while a stone's-throw away, in the historic palace of Louis XIV., the Republic was being brought into the world. (November 10–22, 1873.)

The Duc de Broglie then fell upon his "line of retreat," as he called it, the prolongation of the Marshal's term of office. He aimed at assigning to it a definite period, and making the Presidential powers independent of the Assembly, and above all of future Parliaments. He thus sought to invest the supreme authority in a single man, since he could not incorporate them in a dynasty, and then, around this temporary rulership, to build up parliamentary institutions. There was in his eyes no other way of escape from mob-rule and Cæsarism.

This view was shared by the Comte de Paris, who on November 11 wrote to one of his friends: "We must give France a guarantee of stability. This guarantee is not to be found in a constitutional monarchy. Seeing that we cannot have a monarchy, we must set up a constitutional government with an executive raised above the clash of party strife, exempt from the hazards of parliamentary debate. I cannot

[1] The title given to the Comte de Chambord by his followers. The later reference is to Henry IV.'s conversion to Catholicism for the sake of gaining the French throne, after winning victories for the Huguenot cause at Arques and Ivry.—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

make out why there should be any qualms about calling this government a Republic, so long as we keep that name on coins and elsewhere. Nor do I see any other means of removing that name than to put that of king—or emperor—in its place. And that solution is the one that I wish to avoid at all costs."—This letter explains all that was to follow.

The Comte de Chambord's ruling passion was his fear of the Orleans Princes; the ruling passion of the Orleans princes was their fear of the Empire. It was this fear of the Empire that was destined to make Orleanists combine with Republicans. Rouher upheld the appeal to the nation; he saw clearly the results that an extension of the President's tenure would entail, and pointed them out to the Royalists: "We shall at once have a President of the Republic and two Republican Chambers. The Republic will come. And the Royalists will prove to have been its founders!"

The Assembly prolonged the President's tenure to a period of seven years and appointed a committee of thirty to elaborate the framework of the constitution. On May 15 the Duc de Broglie set forth his proposals: an irresponsible President with a Cabinet responsible to Parliament; two Chambers; the President to have the right of dissolving Parliament, with the consent of the Senate or "Grand Council"; the Grand Council to consist of members elected by the departments, of legal members and of life-members nominated by the President. After listening to this pronouncement, Gambetta said: "If the Right has the good sense to accept this scheme, it will remain in power for fifty years." But the Right would not hear of it. "At the very moment when he (Broglie) put forward the plan he had thought out," remarks the Vicomte de Meaux in his *Souvenirs*, "those who stood to gain most by it drove him from office." The Broglie Cabinet was overthrown by a coalition of Legitimists, Bonapartists, and Republicans on May 16, 1874.

Thus the Comte de Chambord, through his hatred of Orleanism, had made a restoration of the monarchy out of the question, and now his followers were sending the Duc de Broglie to the right-about and wrecking his schemes for

constitution. The Right was perishing from internal feuds. The Assembly had pulled down Thiers, seeing in him the obstacle to a revival of the monarchy, and at the end of a year it found itself back at the point whence it had started. Henceforth the die was cast: after the legitimate kingship, a constitutional monarchy was also ruled out, and the same applied even to a constitution not based on a hereditary throne, but calculated to work against democracy and pave the way for a return to the monarchical system. All parties, whether they would or no, must resign themselves to setting up a Republic.

At the beginning of the year the German elections had been held. The annexed provinces had been called upon for the first time to choose their representatives for the Reichstag. On the whole, they were in favour of absenting themselves from the polls. Gambetta advised them not only to vote, but to return Catholic priests, who, being accustomed to preach in German, would find it easier to speak in the Reichstag (Auguste Lalance: *Mes Souvenirs*). The ballot of 1874 showed a no less determined front than that of 1871, and the members sent to the Parliament of Berlin, like those sent to the Parliament of Bordeaux, went only under protest. In agreement with Gambetta, Teutsch introduced a motion requesting that the inhabitants of the annexed provinces should be consulted as to their incorporation in the Empire. His voice was drowned by shouts and derisive laughter.

Bismarck's aim was threefold: to hold France down under a provisional régime and deny her the opportunity of forming a stable government; to sow discord in her midst; and to prevent her from gaining allies. He set his face against a Monarchy, but was equally opposed to Gambetta. What he wanted was a "disintegrating" Republic, a Republic "with troubles to keep it occupied at home." As early as 1871 he had told Graf von Arnim, his ambassador in Paris, that Gambetta was the only potential leader dangerous to Germany, and that she would not tolerate his accession to power. He was quite willing that his views on the subject should, if the need arose, be divulged. These were his demands, as toned down by von Arnim: "Neither a settled Republic, for

it would become Radical, Gambettist, and the Chancellor did not want a Republic after the Danton pattern; nor a Monarchy, because such a Government would soon become capable of procuring allies for France." The dilemma he implied was obvious enough. Was France drifting towards a Republic? That way lay anarchy. Was she drifting towards a Monarchy? That would mean war. He wished to persuade the Royalists that the Republicans were leading them in the direction of mob-rule, and the Republicans that the Royalists were leading them into risky adventures. The unfortunate thing was that both parties, in the relentless fury of their conflicts, were to show themselves at times too ready to be persuaded and to accept these blasting accusations against their opponents.

On November 21, 1873, Pope Pius IX. had issued an encyclical in which, lamenting over the recent misfortunes of the Church and the Holy See, he depicted in the gloomiest colours the position of the Catholics in Italy, Switzerland and Germany. The Swiss Government had broken off diplomatic relations with him. The Italian Government, on January 1, 1874, had addressed to the Powers a circular confirming its enactment with regard to the guarantees. In France a large number of prelates had responded to the Vatican's appeal. In various episcopal rescripts, Bismarck's policy was condemned. The Bishop of Nîmes wrote: "The Germany of Bismarck has thought fit to carry on the tradition of meanness and immorality." The Duc de Broglie deplored these rash utterances: "It is easy to see," he remarked, pathetically, "that these bishops are not weighted with responsibilities such as ours." On December 26 the Cabinet had issued a circular reminding the community that nations, in commenting on each other's acts, must observe a certain mutual forbearance.

Bismarck, who wished to expand the military forces of Germany, lost no time in turning these indiscretions to account; he made capital out of them at Rome and, in order to alarm Italy, pretended to be alarmed himself. He told our ambassador, Gontaut-Biron, that the circular was not enough,

that the French Government had more effective weapons at its disposal for putting an end to this campaign. If driven to extremities, the German Government would have recourse to the French Act of 1819, which empowered it to prosecute such offenders in person, before the French courts of justice. "For us it is a question of security. Certain persons are stirring up revolt in our midst, within the Empire. Very well, we shall be compelled to declare war upon you before the clerical party, seizing the reins of power, declares war upon Germany."

In the Assembly, the Right fulminated against the weakness of the Cabinet. Du Temple, a deputy of the extreme Right, begged leave to put a question. The new Reichstag met; the Government asked for an emergency vote on the army bill, designed to ensure the pre-eminence of the German army. The Duc Decazes, Minister for Foreign Affairs, replied to Du Temple on January 20: "France will continue to regard the Sovereign Pontiff with a dutiful respect, with a tender and filial solicitude; but, in all good faith, she will maintain peaceful and friendly relations with the Italian State as at present constituted."

The Reichstag met on February 1, 1874. In his speech from the throne, the Emperor demanded an immediate vote on the draft of the army bill. Moltke was insistent: "A wild cry for revenge assails our ears from beyond the Vosges; we might be called upon to face enemies on two fronts, both East and West." The bill was passed on May 2. At the end of the year Prince von Hohenlohe, who had just succeeded Graf von Arnim as ambassador in Paris, discussed Gambetta with Bismarck. "We have nothing to fear from that quarter," said the Chancellor, "even if he knits France together as firmly as you think he will. We are always a match for France, even for a France that is strong. The danger lies in a coalition, but the Republic will never manage to form a coalition against us."—Bismarck was right as regards Gambetta, who did not live long enough to forge the alliances that he contemplated; but he was wrong as regards France and the Republic.

CHAPTER XII

GAMBETTA AND THE CONSTITUTION

Gambetta advises the Left to acknowledge the Constituent Power of the Assembly—The Constitution—"The Grand Council of the French Communes"—End of the National Assembly.

THE Comte de Paris, whose path was blocked by the Comte de Chambord, now urged his friends, from fear of the Empire, to support a Republican constitution. Gambetta, on his side, after having refused to admit the constituent power of the Assembly, soon came round to the opposite way of thinking, and advised his friends to acknowledge that function. From this double change of front the Constitution was to be born.

The Duc de Broglie having fallen, and the Legitimists being at variance with the Orleanists, Gambetta saw that the moment was favourable for the advancement of his plans. He said to himself that perhaps, after all, something could be done with this Chamber. And now we shall witness the triumph of that policy of adjustments, of compromises, of middle courses which his adversaries will call "opportunism."

It is interesting to trace, in the letters and memoirs of adherents of the Right, their successive phases of opinion with regard to Gambetta. At first he is something of an outsider; no one quite ventures to commit himself with this "Bohemian," this "demagogue," this "pot-house and street-corner orator." They find him vulgar. What! Is this the great tribune of the people, this man with the husky voice (he already suffered from intermittent attacks of ill-health, and his speech was at times indistinct), slovenly of attire, theatrical in his gestures, shallow in his mental outlook? It was not long, however, before they realised the

subtlety, the adroitness that lay underneath this Southern vehemence. The gulf was bridged; soon he won their esteem; in the end his sway was complete. He had the same irresistible quality of fascination, the same inborn gift for attracting and dominating that had graced the personality of Mirabeau. The Vicomte de Meaux, in his *Souvenirs*, speaks of the "bitter disappointment" he felt when listening for the first time to the quondam "dictator"; then, little by little, he was caught in the toils, like the others. In spite of themselves, they come under the spell of his ascendancy, his magnetism; even the most stubborn become victims of the lure. At the very last, in an article in the *Correspondant*, this same M. de Meaux dwells upon this "glamour," which even after his death will continue to affect generations yet unborn.

The breach between the Legitimists and the Right Centre, and their successful attack on the Duc de Broglie, gave Gambetta his cue. He began to coquet with them and to win them over to the side of the Republic. At the funeral of the Comte d'Alton-Shée, a former peer of France who had turned Republican, he said: "Let us prove to those who revile us that we are not intolerant; let us show that this Republic, which we are bound to establish sooner or later, can offer a cordial welcome to all loyal recruits, and, above all, to those enlightened sons of the aristocracy who espouse our cause heart and soul. The old aristocracy is an essential part of France, and is still capable of doing her service. If our patricians have the good sense to rally to the new France, to the France of hard work and scientific research, they will, by their lofty patriotism and their exquisite polish, help to confer on her that bloom of refinement and distinction which will make the French Republic in the modern world what the Athenian Republic was in the ancient."

At Auxerre, on the other hand (June 1, 1874), he hails the Left Centre as "head of the column, almost the vanguard." He reminds his hearers of the vigorous action taken by this group when the plot was being hatched for the restoration of the Kingship by divine right. The Left Centre, he avers, will be no less staunch against Bonapartism. He harks back to

the famous Grenoble speech, which is never-endingly being cast in his teeth: "I said new *strata*, not *classes*—an undesirable term, which I never use. It is not a Republic of a partisan character that our Republican democracy calls for, nor an exclusive Republic, a Republic of close corporations; but a Republic of all, a Republic of ten million electors, without a single exception, representing as a whole the sovereignty of the nation."

The Bonapartist party once more raised its head. Gambetta suggested an inquiry into its acts. A violent scene with Rouher ensued. Gambetta, on his way back from Versailles, had his face punched by Rouher at the St. Lazare Station.

He persuaded the Republican Left group and—this was not altogether plain sailing—the majority of his own group, the Republican Union, to make a formal statement that they no longer disputed the constituent power of the Assembly and would support the draft scheme for Republican institutions that had been put forward by the Left Centre (June 13, 1874). He thereby gave a decisive wrench to the tiller. "The next thirty years," says M. Hanotaux, "are the offspring of that day." We shall see how Gambetta evolved a Republic from a Monarchist Assembly and a Senate from a Republican party that did not want one.

The extreme Left, with Louis Blanc, Edgar Quinet, and Ledru-Rollin, could not make up its mind. It dreaded a Republic bearing the Royalist trade-mark, and still advocated the election of a Constituent Assembly. The view was shared by Grévy.

On June 15, Casimir-Perier, the friend of Thiers, the son of the Minister under the July Monarchy, and the brother-in-law of the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier, proposed that the committee dealing with laws for the constitution should take the two-Chamber system as the foundation for its structure. The emergency measure was passed by 345 votes to 341. It was a victory for the Centre. Broglie protested, delivering a general attack on the Republic, on all Republics, the Convention of 1792, the Directory, the Republic of 1848, engulfed by anarchy and Cæsarism, and those for which Grévy, Gambetta,

and Louis Blanc were sponsors. Dufaure asked that what was done at all times, for all countries, might be done for France—that a name and a fixed principle might be assigned to the Government under which men had to live. General de Cissey, Vice-President of the Council, opposed the motion, which was thrown out by 374 votes to 333. The Assembly was prorogued for a period of four months, despite Gambetta, who said to the Right: "The Republic is bound to come, and you will have to accept it, not as party men, or as men swayed by mere sentiment, but as true statesmen. You should set to work in a resolute spirit, and realise that a distinct place is allotted to you in this free democracy; you have a part to play, and no mean part, one to which you are entitled by virtue of your high social position, your antecedents, your ample leisure. The Conservatives have found by experience that a restoration of the kingship is impossible; it is a political blunder on their part, perhaps an irreparable blunder, to reject an alliance with the democracy that would bear abundant fruit. What! you imagine that a coalition of three or four hundred deputies is going to undo the work of the French Revolution? Do you believe it, or do you not? If you do not, you must come to some decision. Take a holiday for a month, and think matters over. If you are capable of establishing a monarchy, you will establish one; if you conclude that a Republic alone is feasible, you will set up a Republic, and you will set up a strong Government, powerful enough to revive, as we all so ardently desire, the glory and the honour of France."

On July 23, he writes to Ranc (unpublished letter): "We don't want a Government created solely for the majority. There is a difference between the welfare of the community and the welfare of the greatest number."

The Assembly was convened again on November 30. At the elections held during the recess, the successful candidates, though of varying shades of opinion, had been Republicans to a man. The Assembly, shrinking from the debate, postponed it to January. This 1875 session was fated to decide the future of France. The Moderates of the Right, more than any

other section, viewed the prospect of an Empire with alarm. The extreme Left continued to propose a dissolution. Thiers, who since his fall had lost all interest in the framing of a constitution, and Jules Grévy demanded the same course. There was nothing for it but to achieve a definite result—or quit the scene.

On January 5, the Marshal, in a message to the Assembly, conjured it to debate forthwith upon the Bill relating to the Senate. On the 25th the Chairman of the Committee spoke in favour of a Second Chamber—"a barrier against the revolutionaries." The first reading of the Bill was passed by 498 votes to 173. There was a majority for the setting-up of a Second Chamber. The Extreme Right, the Bonapartists and Gambetta, with a section of his group, voted against the measure. The form under which the proposed Second Chamber had been ushered in was not one likely to reconcile the Republicans to this institution. The Legitimists, through their unremitting hostility, paved the way for an alliance between the Right and Left Centre.

And now, from amidst this seething whirlpool of emotions, we see the emergence of a mature and dispassionate type of mind: men of the lecture-room and the study, men who had read widely and pondered deeply, men primed with historical lore. They had examined all the political systems, and had come to the conclusion that we cannot swerve with impunity from certain indispensable rules that have stood the test of experience.

The critical days, January 28, 29 and 30, had now arrived. The Left Centre proposed the following clause: "The Government of the Republic consists of two Chambers and one President." The chairman, Edouard Laboulaye, upheld the clause. This distinguished professor, steeped in the history of the United States, saturated with the ideas that inspired the founders of the American Constitution, Hamilton, Madison, Jay, and that admirable miscellany, *The Federalist,* now gave the House the benefit of their precepts of liberty and wisdom; but he knew that the American Constitution is applicable only to a Federal State. His object

was not to demonstrate the comparative merits of a monarchical and a republican system, but simply to point out that the sphere of action was growing narrower and that the iron laws of necessity were coming into play. "The external danger is close upon us; France is perhaps on the eve of another war. Nor is the danger less menacing at home. With the Republic, you can have a Government. If you will not put up with it, you will not have a Government at all. If we do not frame a Constitution, our mandate is at an end, and it is our duty to appeal to the country. The worst of this course is that, before a new Assembly can be got together, the whole Parliamentary system may break down and involve France in its ruin." He wound up his speech with this exhortation: "Yes, seeing the plight that we have reached, it is not too much to address you with a solemn prayer, to entreat you to consider what our position will be to-morrow. The eyes of all Europe are upon you, France implores you, and as for us, we earnestly conjure you, we say to you: 'Do not take upon yourself so terrible a responsibility! Do not leave us in suspense; and, to sum it up in a few words, have pity on our unhappy country!'"

The House was stirred to its depths by this moving appeal. Louis Blanc rose to speak, but was silenced by cries of protest from the Left. Backed by the Right, he insisted on being given a hearing; he stated that he and his friends could never vote for the creation of a Second Chamber. The following day *La République française* published a violent tirade upon him: "M. Louis Blanc's speech was diametrically opposed to the wishes of his whole party. Intent only on parading his own personal views, he failed to see what was going forward in the ranks of the Republic's enemies. He gave them time to lay their heads together, to re-form their battle array, to adopt a line of action. He has assumed a grave responsibility, which we are content to leave entirely upon his shoulders."

"Two theories, two systems, two methods confronted each other," says M. Hanotaux. "The seed of future Republican

disagreements was cast into the very soil from which the Republic itself was to spring."

On January 29 came the vote in the House on the clause advocated by Laboulaye. Louis Blanc, Edgar Quinet, Madier de Montjau, Peyrat and Marcou held aloof. Only five votes were wanted to secure the passing of the amendment. Peyrat rushed into the library, where Louis Blanc and Marcou were ensconced. "It needs five more votes to bring in the Republic," he shouted; "come along!" A crowd gathered round them, and begged them to change their minds. "We let ourselves be hustled into the Chamber," writes Louis Blanc, "and one after the other we dropped our voting-papers into the ballot-box, amid general emotion and to the sound of uproarious cheers, which struck like daggers into our hearts!" By 359 votes to 336 the clause was thrown out.

Wallon, a painstaking historian, thereupon suggested the following provision: "The President of the Republic is elected, through the suffrages of the majority, by the Senate and by the Chamber of Deputies convened in the National Assembly. He is appointed for seven years, and may be re-elected." It is no longer a case of "the Marshal." This time, by a majority of 353 to 352, the amendment was accepted, to the loudly expressed delight of the Left. All the members of this section, including the five members of the extreme Left, had voted for the amendment, while the entire Right took the opposite line. In the Centre, a slight shifting of votes determined the majority.

Léon Say writes, on February 1, 1875: "The carrying of the Wallon amendment by a margin of one vote will lead to some astonishing results. Already we can count upon a majority of sixty for passing, as a whole, a bill which, introduced in an anti-Republican garb, will go forth into the world stamped with a purely Republican hall-mark. The first member I spoke to at the time when this majority of one was announced was the Prince de Joinville. He said to me: 'Your party has won the day, and I am very glad to see it. My personal position compelled me to vote on the other side,

but nothing could have given me greater pleasure than our defeat.' Pasquier told me that he and his friends accepted unreservedly the situation created by this margin of one. We may therefore assume that the Act to establish a constitution will be passed. M. de Broglie consoles himself with the thought that, in spite of all appearances, there is no need to fear the worst. This is a strange delusion on his part, and his friends are beginning to talk in a very different tone."

M. de Vinols informs us that he met Gambetta on the evening of the day when the Laboulaye amendment was carried, and could not help noticing his air of depression. "I saw him again on the day when the Wallon amendment was passed; he was wild with joy, and hardly seemed the same man as the Gambetta of the evening before."

The next question was to determine the composition of the Senate. The Right hoped for a new lease of life as members of this body. The committee proposed three classes of senators: legal experts, nominees of the President of the Republic and the rest appointed by election. Pascal Duprat moved that the senators should be chosen by universal suffrage. The Legitimists held aloof, the Bonapartists voted in favour and the clause was carried by 322 votes to 310. The Marshal interposed, and through the medium of General de Cissey declared that the Government could not accept this result. The Assembly bowed to his will. Henri Brisson moved a dissolution, and asked that the matter might be put to the vote at once. Raoul Duval supported him, and so did Thiers. Gambetta observed to the Cabinet: "Thanks to the jarring note that has been introduced, the whole issue is at stake. We have voted for the principle of the Senate, we have swallowed our scruples, and now you come and tell us that you want a Senate entirely of your own making! This sort of thing cannot go on. Since matters have reached this stage, let us dissolve, let us appeal to the country!" The emergency vote on dissolution was rejected. Wallon asked the Chamber to adjourn until February 15. The Marshal was urged to form a new Cabinet based on the majority of May 24, and including the Bonapartists. MacMahon sum-

moned the Duc de Broglie. The latter maintained that "the task of framing laws for the constitution must not be given up." He reproduced the views of the Comte de Paris in the following phrase: "An alliance with the Bonapartists is out of the question." Furthermore, he advised the Marshal to send for Buffet.

The Right carried on their negotiations under the ægis and under the roof of Casimir-Perier and his brother-in-law, D'Audiffret Pasquier. On February 19 the printed form of a clause signed by Wallon was distributed among the Assembly: "The Senate consists of 300 members, 225 elected by the Colonies and Departments and 75 by the National Assembly. . . . The senators elected by the National Assembly are irremovable." Frantic demonstrations from the extreme Right. The Right Centre accepted the draft. Among the Left, only one Deputy opposed it, to wit Grévy. Of the Republican Unionists, Edgar Quinet, Louis Blanc and Madier de Montjau also fought the proposal; the unity that had been lately re-established was in danger of impairment. Gambetta sprang into the breach and rallied his scattering forces. He was no longer merely the orator, the party chief; he was the wary negotiator, the far-seeing diplomat, who could appeal with equal force to the intellect and to the emotions. It was an impressive scene when the Republicans, in order to save France from a dictatorship, threw their traditions and their personal preferences overboard. Through the supple genius of Gambetta, realities took the place of bloodless abstractions, and the spirit of rigid formalism yielded to the spirit of enlightened statecraft. The clause was passed. The minority comprised the Right and the Bonapartists, the majority, the Left, the Right Centre and some stray adherents of the Moderate Right. Grévy refrained from voting. The Duc de Broglie, after shilly-shallying up to the eleventh hour, decided to record his vote. The Extreme Left, Louis Blanc, Madier de Montjau and Edgar Quinet, did not vote. They were deaf to Gambetta's entreaties. Louis Blanc remarks, with reference to Edgar Quinet: "He, too, stood his ground, but at what a cost! I can still see the grand old

man collapsing into his seat, so overwrought that the tears were trickling down his cheeks!" The composition of the Senate was settled; the Republic was an accomplished fact. (January 25, 1875.)

Thus the new French State system was the outcome of a series of compromises between the Constitutional Monarchists and the Republicans, between the representatives of the *bourgeoisie* and of the democracy. The vanquished were the champions of royalty by divine right and the partisans of the Empire. It was in the teeth of their opposition that the work of 1875 was achieved.

On March 3 Gambetta wrote to Ranc (unpublished letter): "The Republic, which we wish to build up on a rock-bottom foundation, will be thrown open to all in that it ceases to be directed by a single faction. . . . Whatever the merits or drawbacks of the Constitution, our aim should be, not to weaken the structure, but to cement it more firmly. It is a work of peace-making and bridge-building, which has afforded the Republicans a unique opportunity of displaying to the country their apparent harmony. We have done well to break for a while with the intractable element. In this respect I don't quite see eye to eye with you, who are forming a phalanx of the Left against reaction. Our new-born infant should make for unity, and accordingly for patriotism. At last the country will see its dream come true—the achievement of a combination which, if it had been brought about sixty, forty or even thirty years earlier, would have turned the wheel of the revolution round full circle. The statesmanship that paved the way for such a triumph is the only one that can properly develop its results."

On March 11 Buffet was called upon to take office. He had neither the breadth of view nor the literary gifts of the Duc de Broglie, but he was a man of sincere convictions, energetic, strong-willed; his outspoken address and his solid reasoning made a deep impression on the Assembly. No one was better versed in budgets and tariffs. In the economic and financial sphere he was a tough fighter and a redoubtable opponent.

Moreover, his lofty moral bearing earned him universal respect.

On the 29th Gambetta delivered a funeral oration over Edgar Quinet. He paid tribute to the memory of Michelet and of Ledru-Rollin, who had both recently died. He recalled Quinet's prophecies with regard to Germany: "This scholar and poet saw invasion looming up behind the cloudy and pedantic theories that were being spun in the German universities." Then, turning to the benches of the Extreme Left: "There are certain rifts within the lute, but our agreement on fundamentals is proof against all attempts to destroy it. We follow in the footsteps of our predecessors. Their principles are ours. It is only the methods of upholding them that have changed. Democracy, in assuming control, is faced with great dangers. Power brings with it knotty problems to be solved. When we are in the majority, we must govern what we have won, we must show ourselves worthy to keep. Therefore we must school ourselves to discipline and patience, and learn the art of pulling together. Let us combine prudence with strength. Let us beware of listening to the counsels of hotheads. We are on the right track. We have only to go on as we have begun!"

At Ménilmontant, on April 23, he made a speech that ranks among the most memorable and important of his career. Never had he shown more political insight, more clearness of vision, more daring originality. "Does the compact still hold good?" he asked his constituents. Cries of "Yes! Yes!" were heard from all sides. Then, for a space of several hours, before the keen scrutiny of this huge popular audience, he proceeded to take to pieces, bit by bit, the whole mechanism of the new *régime*.

What a masterly feat was this sort of lecture in constitutional law to a gathering of labourers, factory hands, artisans and shopkeepers! At these mass meetings one finds a remarkable degree of shrewdness, of penetration, of intellectual curiosity; the people have a sense for the finest shades of meaning, they are aglow with eagerness to learn, they are all warmth and fire. Such encounters do equal credit to a

public quick to grasp both the beauties of oratory and the force of ideas, and to a speaker who can touch the right intellectual and emotional chords and temper the passion of the multitude with wisdom.

From a horror of Cæsarism, he explains, we have determined to end a dangerous interregnum; we have framed a Constitution. "If we are willing to take this Constitution to our bosom and use it as our own, above all to study it thoroughly so that we can put it into practice, it may well prove to have furnished the Republican democracy with the best instrument of freedom ever placed into its hands."

First, the President of the Republic. Since his authority no longer springs from the direct suffrage of the nation, there can be no further question of setting up the guardian of the laws as superior to their makers, the representatives of the country. His position, though modest, is still dignified enough to ensure that, with the powers allotted to him, he shall be a worthy first magistrate of France and a worthy executor of the laws committed to his charge.

Then he dealt with the Senate. Those who first hit upon the idea of having a Senate had intended to provide "a sort of last refuge for those rejected at the polls." Their conception had merely been one of establishing a check upon the popular will. It remained to be seen whether those who cherished this idea fully realised what it meant, whether in seeking to create a stronghold of reaction they had not set up an organism essentially democratic in its origin, its tendencies and its future career. What a contrast between the Upper Chamber that stood for birth, wealth, the Church, the great landed estates—the Duc de Broglie's Senate, appointed by the President or by a narrow body of privileged electors—and the Senate that had finally emerged from the struggles of the Assembly. "We must look upon it as the sheet-anchor on which the safety of the good ship 'State' depends. Why? Because it is the handiwork of the Communes.[1] The most

[1] The *commune* (originally a borough which had obtained self-governing rights by charter from the feudal lord) is now a territorial division administered by a mayor and municipal council.—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

royalist of Assemblies, having to institute a Second Chamber, has actually fixed as its starting-point—what? The most democratic thing in the country, the communal spirit, the thirty-six thousand communes of France! What is going to issue from the ballot-boxes? A Senate? No—the Grand Council of the French Communes." And, with a presentiment of the crisis of 1889, he adds: "It is in the Senate that the last battle will be fought!"

"Rest assured that, once you have tried this experiment, you will not let it drop. Political institutions nearly always lead men further than they anticipate, and this institution is no exception to the rule. The circumstances and the men that have shaped it are not altogether worthy of their creation. You must give it a trial, and your labour must be a labour of love."

These were decidedly novel ideas for the Republicans of those days. They had hitherto drawn their sole inspiration from the revolutionary theories of 1789–1793 and 1848. As for the Presidency, the men of the Revolution, taking their stand against kingship, had never desired a single supreme authority at the head of the State. These points had not been gained without wailing and gnashing of teeth. Gambetta, by inducing the French democracy to accept these institutions, became the founder of the parliamentary Republic.

The Assembly was re-opened on November 4. This was the last phase.

The constitution had now been passed and a parliamentary *régime* set up. What is the meaning of a parliamentary *régime*? It means the existence of a compact majority as the basis for a strong, enduring Government, which is to carry out a fruitful and vigorous policy. That, indeed, is what Gambetta demanded and did his best to secure. Things, however, did not move so fast as he had expected. He would allow of no halting-places; he was too eager to quicken the pace. The difficulties of parliamentary life are tremendous. It needs an uncommon force of character to hold out, to resist the current, to keep one's head above water, "to rule over the mob of petty men who aspire to rule," as Thiers said in

speaking of Pitt. Yet these very difficulties lend that life its greatest charm.

In Gambetta's opinion, the best method of evolving a majority was to have the most comprehensive ballot-system, the one that gave prominence to ideas rather than personalities, the *scrutin de liste*.[1] Not that he saw in it a cure for all ills—the electoral system is an affair of tactics rather than of principles—but he subordinated everything to his main design: "We must create a Governmental majority," he said, "and put an end to our internal feuds. The policy that we should strive after is one of pacifying and reconciling. What would our plight be to-morrow if, after approving these institutions, explaining them to the country and getting them into working order, we still offered to the world, not a picture of vigorous and concerted action, but a sorry exhibition of futile wrangling and anarchical chaos?" Then, with a touch of prophetic sadness: "You smile when I speak of moderation. Well, we shall see a good deal of each other yet; and unless I am struck down by an untimely death, I hope to give you fairly conclusive proofs that when I claim a spirit of moderation, it is no idle boast. Alas! he died before reaching the goal. He had the last word before the tribunal of history, but not in his lifetime. The formation of that Governmental majority was now inevitable, it was only a matter of time; but he was to vanish from the scene before he could attain the object of his unswerving pursuit.

He had a foreboding, by the way, of the difficulties that strewed his path. "One sometimes hears of 'steam-tug' candidates," he remarked on one occasion. Naturally, he had a fellow-feeling for such candidates! "We may treat this electoral delusion with the contempt it deserves. In the first place, a nation would have no cause for complaint if it were favoured with a large number of men capable of acting as 'steam-tugs.' This would prove that the parties contained

[1] In the *scrutin de liste* the elector votes for all the Deputies and Senators of the Department; in the *scrutin d'arrondissement* (see below) he votes for one representative only (in his own arrondissement). The order of territorial divisions is department, arrondissement, canton and commune; the two latter are local, not parliamentary. —TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

some exceedingly brilliant personalities, and the richer France was in personalities of this stamp, the more surely could she rely on a constant succession of statesmen at the helm to save her from running on the rocks of revolution—and the more cause she would have, I think, to congratulate herself!" A statement that many will dispute!

From this time on he has one overmastering impulse, one ideal that he will pursue vainly to the very last, and he puts it into these words: "In the present plight of France and Europe, the noblest task a man can compass is to build up a Government that shall be really strong, with power to mould public opinion, not only in France, but throughout Europe as well. In a country like France, the function of the statesman is quite different to-day from what it was in times gone by. When a nation's material forces are still intact, when the circle of its frontiers is unbroken, there may be scope for discussing questions of political philosophy; but in a country that has been partly shorn of its territory, such a course is nothing short of criminal and sacrilegious. And as you are trying to find a reason for what was done on February 25, and for the policy of harmonising and pacifying, I will give it you: look at the gap in the Vosges!"

Amid the din and clatter of warring parties, he sought to come as a peace-maker, to bring order and discipline into the Republic. However large parties may be, they are, as their very name denotes, partisan and parts of a whole. If Parliament is the mirror of the nation, it is a mirror shattered into fragments. What a labour of Hercules, to produce from the motley concourse of parties a national policy! England had succeeded in the task. Gambetta was fired by the most glorious ambition to which a lofty soul can aspire: he sought to become leader of a democracy, to govern a free country, not by force, but by persuasion, by reasoned eloquence, and thus to win back for it some day its former territory and its former greatness.

Buffet advocated the *scrutin d'arrondissement*, which was adopted by 388 votes to 322.

First of all the Assembly had to nominate the 75 irremov-

able senators. Gambetta, by dint of a compact between Republicans, Legitimists and Bonapartists, ousted the Orleanists. He thus continued to make the Republic reap the benefit of the institutions which its enemies had devised for its undoing. "This is no majority," cried the Duc de Broglie, "it is a coalition of hatreds!" Alas, there was hatred in every camp!

The Assembly had lived its allotted span. It had been elected for the purpose of concluding peace. When once peace was concluded, was it its duty and had it the power to give place to another assembly? But our territory was still under enemy occupation. When once the territory was set free, was it its duty, had it the power, to let the voice of the country make itself heard? The Republicans favoured this step, for they feared lest the Assembly should set up a king. The Royalists clung obstinately to their hopes. These hopes dashed, they resigned themselves to shaping a Republic. The Assembly was far from showing a dead level of mediocrity. No party was without men of conspicuous talent, and these, when taken together, formed a notable array of intelligence and patriotism. This Parliament had made peace, restored order, improved the financial position, passed important measures, Army acts, acts dealing with the county councils, the protection of children and girls under twenty-one working in factories, the protection of lads employed as errand-boys, newsvendors and the like, the prevention of cruelty to young children, the drink question, and the tax on transferable securities; it had established new chairs in the universities, instituted an inquiry into the condition of the workers, and so forth. When it went to Bordeaux, the country was at its last gasp. When it dissolved, five years later, France was raised to her feet again, the Army and the finances were rehabilitated; France had as yet no allies, it is true, but she was no longer isolated in Europe; in short, a sound political fabric, created by the force of circumstances and destined to endure, had been built up. This Assembly, though handicapped by the burden of the past, had laid the foundations of the future.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SPIRIT OF THE 1875 CONSTITUTION

Gambetta and the Bicameral System—The President of the Republic—Gambetta felt certain that this Constitution would last.

THE Constitution of 1875 can already boast a life of four-and-forty years—a longer spell than any of its precursors since the French Revolution. How has this come to pass? Gambetta, with remarkable insight, had shadowed forth some of the reasons.

In the first place, he realised the essential niche that the Senate might fill in the Republic. Where the Royalists of the National Assembly had originally seen nothing more than a guarantee for their survival, a means of counteracting the effects of universal suffrage, Gambetta saw a potential weapon for foiling the endeavours of reactionaries and would-be autocrats. The trend of events during the Boulanger crisis proved his contention up to the hilt. Instead of being a citadel of resistance to the Republic, the Senate became a tower of strength for its defence.

It was also quite on the cards that the Senate, in face of a Chamber that had no majority, might prove a factor making for Republican stability. The 1885 Chamber, for instance, elected amid the throes of an economic crisis, and following close upon Lang-Son's fiasco in Tonkin, was split up into three sections, two of which combined against the third to prevent it from governing. Suppose that at this moment the Assembly had been the sole administrative body, and the Cabinet crises had developed into Presidential crises, how far might the Boulangist movement not have carried us? Between 1875 and 1919, France has had fifty-three Cabinets. Had the Presi-

dency changed hands as often as this, how could the Republic have outlasted such a *régime*?

Gambetta's conversion to the two-Chamber system was gradual, and not achieved without effort. Certain of his friends, M. de Freycinet in particular, had done a good deal towards bringing him over. The Republicans had hitherto looked upon the Republic and single-Chamber Government as synonymous terms. The division of the legislative power between two Assemblies seemed in their eyes a return to the period of reaction, to the year 1791, to Louis XVIII., the July Monarchy and Louis-Philippe. They were not altogether awake to the signs of the times abroad; they often overlooked the fact that all the important States of the day had bicameral Parliaments. To maintain a single Assembly was scarcely practicable, implying as it did either that the President, if chosen by that body, would always be at the mercy of caprice and might at any moment be overthrown as Thiers was overthrown in 1873; or that, if chosen by the people, he was in danger of coming into conflict with the representatives of the nation, as had been the case with Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte in 1851.

As regards the Presidency, indeed, the lesson of 1848 had not been lost on the Republicans, and Gambetta reminded the country that if the First Magistrate was appointed by the people, he might easily ride rough-shod over the Assembly. Some theorists, on the other hand, holding that a President who was a creation of the Chambers was liable to become their victim, turned their eyes towards the United States. Now if the architects of the American Constitution had invested the President of the United States with ample authority, it was only because in the beginning that authority was exercised over a somewhat narrow domain. The Federal Constitution was to serve only as a useful connecting-link—especially for the purpose of foreign relations—between the various political units that had sprung up on North American soil. The individual States were given virtually unlimited control over their internal affairs. It is among the outstanding portents of history that this mechanism has never failed to suit the

expanding needs of a vast empire, whether in foreign, colonia or military policy. If we strove to apply such a system t our over-centralised France, what would be the result? Fo a space of four years (since the term of the President's offic would inevitably be reduced) we should have the undisputed sway of the dominant party, a minority utterly cowed by the majority, and, in consequence, less stability and less freedom The American plan presupposes a federated State, a country in an advanced stage of decentralisation.

In France, the President of the Republic enjoys a high privilege, which has not been wielded by the British Sovereign since the days of George I., and which is regarded with no little astonishment by our neighbours across the Channel: he takes the chair at Cabinet Councils. This function is some thing more than a mere formality; it may involve the play o character, the expression of an individual will. Such a President as Jules Grévy, for instance, who had never held a Cabinet post, contrived to exert a commanding influence a meetings of the Council. He would first allow Ministers to have their say, without interposing a single comment; then, under plea of winding up the discussion, he would summarise the leading points and stealthily introduce his own opinion, with such flawless tact and such cogent reasoning that in the end he generally succeeded in making it prevail.

"The President of the Republic, acting on the concurrent advice of the Senate, may dissolve the Chamber of Deputies before the legal expiry of its mandate." From the very outset, from the day after the Constitution was approved, this maxim, as we shall see later, was doomed to be infringed. In England, ministerial responsibility has no meaning apart from a consultation of the people. The dissolution of the House of Commons is a process essential to the working of the democratic machine, the regular form in which an appeal to the country is clothed. This appeal is not one that involves a mere answer "yes" or "no"—a snare and a delusion—or the acceptance or rejection of some individual leader—a frequent means of avoiding a straight issue—but is based upon some legislative proposal or some question of policy, upon

the general administration of affairs. In our case, the dissolution of the Chamber is nothing more than a ministerial decree, since every Presidential decree has to be countersigned by a Minister. In striking contrast with the English practice, the 1875 Constitution, from distrust of personal power, requires for a dissolution the consent of the Senate—a provision that only complicates matters, since it implies a previous discussion. Finally, when the maximum term of life for Parliament is four years, the exercise of the right to dissolve is beset with difficulties; it would be well to fix a somewhat longer term, as in England. "The power to dissolve Parliament," Waldeck-Rousseau has remarked, "is not a menace, but a safeguard, for universal suffrage." It has been provided, not in the interest of Governments, but in the interest of the community at large.

The 1875 Constitution did not emerge fully armed from the brain of any one man; it was not the offspring of fine-spun theories that owed nothing to practical experience. It was the child of circumstances, slowly and painfully brought to birth from the womb of reality, and a long series of struggles, a clash of hostile forces, went to the moulding of its character. These warring elements, which might have proved its weakness, turned out to be a source of strength, just as the stones of an arch, while seeming to drag it towards its fall, serve to buttress it up. In the same way the American Constitution was the outcome of a compromise between the advocates of federation and the champions of State autonomy. Like ours, it was a bargain, a compact, a peace treaty. It was the joint work of opponents who had resigned themselves to the inevitable and of partisans who were to some extent sceptical as to the merits of the government they were about to set up. There, too, it was only after a long process of give-and-take that the advocates of State separatism on the one hand, and the admirers of English institutions on the other, found their common measure in a document which did not give entire satisfaction to either side. And perhaps it is just because the United States' Constitution was not hatched in a day from the brain of an individual or the doctrines

of a school, but was created by the force of events, b
historical necessity—perhaps it is for this very reason th
it has worn so well and adapted itself, with amazin
elasticity, to the most unlooked-for phases in the growth
this Titanic democracy.

In America as in France, rare self-denial was shown b
some who from their great services might well have claim
the right to a more stubborn attitude. For Franklin, as f
Gambetta, the new dispensation was not good enough; h
would have liked something on more democratic line
Hamilton, on the other hand, protested that it went too fa
Nevertheless, both men voted in its favour. Washingto
doubted whether it would work. No one was sanguine as
its chances of success, but no one cared to risk the ruin of th
country by opening the sluice-gates to anarchy. "Let t
give the Constitution a trial," said Franklin, in a nob
speech; "if we bring good will to bear on it, we shall contri
to amend its faults. For my part, I accept it, since I ca
hope for nothing better. For the sake of the public weal
will smother my opinion as to its defects. I have nev
uttered a word on the subject outside this Assembly. Withi
these walls my doubts took rise, within these walls they sha
be buried."

The Versailles Assembly saw men surrender their convi
tions with no less honour and no less regret. And what, aft
all, was this heart-racking compromise but the climax of
century of abortive experiments, of kaleidoscopic changes, o
endless revolutions? What was it but the outcome of a serie
of conflicting systems, tried and found wanting by ou
country throughout the past hundred years? How long a lif
had the Constitution of 1791, which endeavoured to combin
the authority of a single Chamber with the royal veto, un
checked by ministerial responsibility, which never said th
last word on anything and which provoked Washington t
exclaim: "If I know anything of the French nation, ther
will be plenty of bloodshed, and a despotism will arise mor
oppressive than the one that she boasts of having swep
away!"? How long a life had the Constitution of 1793

hich resulted in the tyranny of committees, in government y local Assemblies, in plebiscites and in revolt? Or the onstitution of 1795, a political cross-breed, engendered by ear, a tangle of baffling complexities? Or that of the year III. of the Revolution, with its three Consuls? Or the onsulate? Or the Napoleonic dictatorship? Or the Constitution of April 6, 1814, restoring the monarchy, or that of une 4, with a suffrage based on property qualification? Or he Additional Act of April 22, 1815, which also let the question of "the last word" hang over—as was clear enough in 830? Or the Charter of 1830, with the property qualification gain? Or the Constitution of 1848, that formidable *tête-à-ête* (in Tocqueville's pithy phrase) by which an Assembly ndowed with right confronted a President endowed with ight, with the inevitable result that the representative of ight triumphed over his rival? Or the Constitution of 852, under which the Emperor was responsible to the nation n name but not in fact, and the Legislative Body, if it wanted o change its policy, could not change the Ministers, the pshot being that the will of one man directed everything and ould land the whole country in disaster? Or, last of all, he Liberal Empire? From all these ill-fated ventures the 875 Constitution had learnt its lessons.

Two books issued under the Second Empire had a marked nfluence on the decisions of the National Assembly: *Vues ur le gouvernement de la France,* by the Duc Victor de Broglie, and *La France nouvelle,* by Prevost-Paradol. De Broglie's book was written in 1861, but after a few copies had been run off the press it was seized by the police, and did not appear till 1870. Prevost-Paradol's was published in 868. It was to these fountain-heads that the generation destined to fashion the 1875 Constitution resorted for its schooling. Neither work lays stress on the nature of that *régime.* Let us listen to Victor de Broglie: "Frankly speaking, the choice for lovers of freedom lies between two alternatives—a republic bordering on a constitutional monarchy, and a constitutional monarchy bordering on a republic and differing from one only in the composition and tenure of the

executive. Any other kind of republic means a Convention,[1] any other kind of monarchy means an Empire." He adds: "It would be wise to choose a republic rather than civil war." He was the first to give some hint, as early as 1861, of a view much developed by Thiers: "For us it would be the form of government that causes fewest cleavages." He particularly set his face against a Legitimist restoration: "The worst type of revolution," he says, "is a restoration."

And Prevost-Paradol: "We are trying to discover institutions that can adapt themselves equally well to a monarchical form or a republican form, to preserve liberty within the framework of democracy." Again: "The preponderant influence (or, if you will, the last word in every dispute) being granted to the popular Assembly, with the sole reservation that the right to dissolve Parliament is confined to the executive, this influence will be exercised in three ways: through the vote on the Estimates, through the vote on legislative measures, and through the re-modelling of Ministries." Thus he claimed, for a legislative Assembly chosen directly by popular suffrage, what he called "the privilege of the last word."

Democratic, Liberal, parliamentarian, the representative system cast into the mould of universal suffrage—these were the conceptions revived by Thiers in 1871, epitomised by Casimir-Perier in his scheme, later by Laboulaye (who himself had championed them in 1863, in his book *La Partie libérale* and in the third volume of his *Histoire des Etats-Unis*), and Wallon, finally by Gambetta and the Republicans who helped to pass the statutes regarding the Constitution. Dread of Bonapartism, which was beginning to raise its head again, the memory of disasters, and a loathing for dictatorship in all its forms, were the chief motives at the back of their minds. For these disappointed Constitutional Monarchists and these Republicans who had ceased to kick against the pricks, the main object was to forestall the ever-threatening dangers of personal rule, and to safeguard political freedom. In approv-

[1] *I.e.*, the efficient but tyrannous National Convention of 1792.—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

ing the Constitution of 1875, the National Assembly sought to prevent a repetition of the misfortunes in which it had been cradled. A division of the legislative functions; cohesion and responsibility in the executive; at the apex of the pyramid, a ruler with sole authority (a thing that the Revolution had tried to avoid), but not hereditary; at the base, universal suffrage, from which the National Assembly itself derived its power; the two-chamber system, as in England, in America, in all the great States, whether monarchical or republican; ministerial responsibility, collective in some cases, individual in others; an appeal to the country in the event of disagreement between Cabinet and Chamber—thus was the edifice rebuilt after that long succession of earthquakes. Incidentally, the Constitution was no cast-iron fabric, but was always amenable to revision.

Gambetta was almost alone at the time in believing that this charter—a compact, not merely between constitutional theories that were pitted against each other in the Assembly, but between constitutional systems that had been pitted against each other in France for well-nigh a century—was of the stuff that would endure. His faith was justified by results. But he did not foresee that the very persons on whom would fall the duty of putting it into practice would modify its principles. The difficulties under which France was to labour for forty years to come—*imprimis,* fluctuations in the Cabinet: what human undertaking can prosper when subject to incessant changes?—were not all due to evils inherent in the Constitution; on the contrary, they often arose from breaches of the Constitution in the letter or in the spirit.

Modern democracies, up to the present, have hit upon two methods of self-government, and two only: in federalised States the American system, in centralised States the parliamentary *régime,* but a parliamentary *régime* with its indispensable laws, its essential rules of procedure. The ensuing chapters will illustrate the truth of this maxim. After forty-four years of experience, France will have to investigate by what means—fresh interpretation of the existing laws, fresh legislation, or both—she may, through delimiting functions

more wisely, redress abuses and restore whatever elements of good have been suffered to lapse. The task will have to be carried out with great foresight, care and knowledge. We shall be compelled to guard against incompetence, against hastily devised makeshifts, against abstract dialectics and theories divorced from practice (such as have already cost us so dear), and against a spirit of reckless adventure. In any case, the most scrupulously worded documents will not be enough; we shall need the moral principles, the good sense, the reasoning faculty of living men.

Gambetta, like Mirabeau, was an impassioned orator and a sturdy realist; but Mirabeau said (February 14, 1790): "It fills me with dismay to think that I shall have done no more than contribute towards a vast upheaval." Gambetta, on the other hand, could justly claim to have achieved constructive work, to have played his part in rearing the new order. If the institution of a Second Chamber has ceased to be an exotic in Republican France, it is he, before all men, to whom the credit is due. And if the Republic has managed to survive, it is thanks to the establishment of a Second Chamber. He had seen clearly the various causes that had kept the Republican idea from prevailing in the past; instead of theories and abstractions, he brought a practical, effective statesmanship to bear upon the situation. His great achievement was to make this new departure acceptable, in the teeth of intellectual and moral prejudices, of a scepticism almost universal. After the Republic of 1792 and that of 1848, which had lived for so brief a span, he founded a Republic which has lasted for close on half a century and has withstood the mightiest cataclysm that history records. By this feat he has earned a unique place in the annals of French political thought.

PART IV

THE EARLY STAGES OF PARLIAMENTARY REPUBLIC

(1876–1882)

CHAPTER XIV

GAMBETTA'S IDEAS

Gambetta's Ideas on Home and Foreign Policy—The 1876 Elections—Gambetta leads the Campaign: his Speeches, his Ideas—Gambetta as Chairman of the Budget Committee—His Views on Foreign Policy, as recorded in Unpublished Letters.

THE elections to the Senate were fixed for January 30, those of the Deputies for February 20. The Buffet Ministry was divided, Dufaure and Léon Say leaning towards the Left, Buffet towards the Right. He began by prohibiting public meetings and banquets.

Gambetta, at Aix, on January 18, spoke in praise of the Constitution: it might well be the best, since it was the most practical yet devised for our country. The Senate, which some had hoped would act as the scowling and suspicious gaoler of democracy, would become the enlightened guardian of internal peace. He tells the Republicans once more: "It is the Senate that will be your refuge and your sheet-anchor. You greeted this institution with distrust and reserve, but you are beginning to associate with it on rather more friendly terms. You can take it from me that when a few more years have rolled by we shall all be going out of our way to stand up for the Senate."

He traces the broad outline of a "Conservative" programme: We are Conservative if we want a society that knows no privileges, such a society as was organised by the Civil Code; we are Conservative if we want liberty of conscience, on the lines laid down by the Civil Code; we are Conservative if we want freedom of thought, freedom of worship, consideration for the child, for the father and mother, under the ægis of equal laws for all, if we desire that every

Frenchman shall share both the burdens and the advantages, the guarantees of citizenship. Once more he summons those who should gather under the flag: "You have a chance of playing a momentous part in the republic, for education, social weight and the leisure of wealth are yours. Join our side, and we can assure you a rank, a prestige and an influence that will enable you to use your capacities for the public good." Finally, he turned to the Marshal and exerted himself to reassure him, to bring him over as well: "They try to persuade the First Magistrate that we are apostles of revolution. We shall confound our detractors yet. A day will come when it will have to be recognised on all hands, and especially in the most exalted governing circles, that those who cast a slur upon individuals and communities devoted to the Republican ideal run the risk of ignoring a national force."

After the elections, the Senate was made up of the following elements: Left Centre, 84; Republican Centre, 50; Extreme Left, 15; Constitutionalists, 17; Right Centre and Moderate Right, 81; Extreme Right, 13; Bonapartists, 40. And now for the elections to the legislative Chamber!

Thiers being debarred by age, Gambetta alone took the field. He scoured the country, with unerring vision and an eloquence that nothing could tire, to preach confidence and self-restraint.

At Lille, on February 6, after calling up the memory of Faidherbe, he maintained that the Senate had come out of the recent elections with flying colours. "Some may think that it is not progressive enough. For my part, I see every reason to be satisfied. It will fulfil its true mission, that of curbing any abuse of political power." We must now crown the victory by sending Republicans, champions of democracy, to the Chamber of Deputies: "The genuine democrat will not merely acknowledge men as equal, he will make them equal." Let us be Liberals. "By a 'Liberal' I mean one who is pledged to liberty of conscience in all its forms, one who prizes all religions alike, while reserving for himself the freedom to profess any one of them or to reject them all, one who

will not trample on the ministers of the various cults. By a "Liberal" I also mean one who has made up his mind to prevent any clerical faction from becoming a force in the political world. I propose that the Church shall remain the Church. There lies the peril, not merely for France, but for Europe." Finally, he comes back to the great idea, though here he expresses himself in guarded language: "For the sake of the balance of Europe and the triumph of justice, I hope that some day, merely through the prevalence of right, the brethren now sundered from us will return to the fold."

On February 9 he is at Avignon. At Cavaillon stones are thrown at him: he is refused a hearing. On the 13th he is at Bordeaux, where he recalls to the minds of his audience the tragic days of 1870 and his own programme of 1871: for already the history of contemporary France seems to be identifying itself with the history of this man's brief career. He shows that the separation of Church and State, the income-tax, the freedom of the Press, the unfettered right to hold public meetings and form trades-unions, have already been introduced elsewhere. Nevertheless, he does not demand that all these reforms shall be effected at once: "Far be it from me to guarantee that your representatives will carry them out during their four years of legislative activity; I don't believe it, and to speak quite frankly, I should be sorry if they did."

On February 15, in Paris: "The period of danger is over; the period of difficulties has begun. Victors in the electoral conflict, with a majority in the Assemblies, we are now going to be asked—as indeed is only reasonable—for the proof that we know how to govern. From now onward we shall have to keep a close watch on ourselves and never venture on a single step without having thoroughly tested whether the ground is firm, without having made sure of our rear. This policy, *the policy of results,* is the only one suited to the interests of the democracy. I belong to a school that refuses to dogmatise, that believes in analysis, in observation, in the study of facts, to a school that takes account of environment, of tendencies, of prejudices, even of hostilities, for one must

take account of everything; paradoxes and sophisms have no less influence than truths on the conduct of men."

Certain Republicans began to complain that this style of speaking was not bold enough. Alfred Naquet, Gambetta's rival at Marseilles, called for a single Assembly, with power to dismiss the Executive whenever it thought fit, a direct appeal to the people as in 1793, elective judges, and the abolition of standing armies. "Gambetta and his friends," he said, "have fallen into the rut of Constitutionalism, let them stay there; we must form, outside their circle, a group that will fight in the van, the warriors of democracy."

On February 20, out of 533 seats the Republicans gained 300 (40 went to the Left Centre, 180 to the Left and 80 to the Extreme Left); the Constitutionals, 20; the Orleanists, 45; the Legitimists, 20; and the Bonapartists, 50. In 105 constituencies there was a second count. The Centres had suffered a landslide. The leaders of the Right, Duc Decazes, Target, Baragnon, De Carayou-Latour, Casenove de Pradine, were nearly all rejected. Buffet, the Premier, was defeated in all the four constituencies for which he successively stood; Gambetta was returned in Paris, Marseilles, Lille and Bordeaux, Thiers in Paris. Among the new Republican members were Georges Clemenceau and Charles Floquet (who had handed in their resignation in 1871), Spuller, Lionville, Albert Joly, Devès, Antonin Proust, Allain-Targé, Emile Deschanel, Menier, Jean-Casimir Perier, Raspail, Marcellin Pellet, Constans, Emile Loubet and Armand Fallières. The Conservative chiefs held a consultation. Buffet advised resistance, but the Duc de Broglie was of a different opinion; it was better, he thought, to give the Chamber rope enough to hang itself. This view prevailed.

On the 28th, between the two ballots, Gambetta again warned the public that the danger of foreign complications must not be overlooked. The clericals were naturally a pillar of the Conservative Party—an ominous connection for both. The religious problem must be looked at from a European standpoint. Bismarck, now in the thick of the *Kulturkampf* and Italy, fresh from the triumph of achieving unity, were not

anxious to see the Right carry all before it in France. "We have nothing to hope for from the spirit of internationalism and of proselytism at all costs. It is the policy of the Second Empire that we have to thank for the unenviable position that we hold among the Powers to-day. We must see to it that the French Republic becomes recognised, not merely by the peoples but by the Governments of Europe, as a force making for peace and general security."

A further appeal at the Elysée[1]: "At home, France has done her best to secure a majority that shall not be a majority for obstruction but a majority for government. The President of the Republic may rest assured that it will not be the Republicans who will call in question the authority granted to him under the fundamental pact. We want the Constitution, the whole Constitution. It is our safeguard, our strength. . . ." He grows more moderate than ever, rousing the Conservatives again and again, imploring them to assume, in the new order of things, the place which is theirs by right of tradition, of culture and of influence. "Just because we are the stronger, we must not go to extremes. The statesmanship of to-morrow must be the statesmanship that has made the Constitution. We must not be too hard on the Liberals who have clung obstinately to the political creed of the governing classes. If they come to us, we must give them a welcome, open our ranks to them and say to them: 'That's better! Now you will have a chance of playing the part that you deserve. When you are at grips with your opponent, when you are struggling to gain the position that is your due, then you are justified in letting your passion run riot; but as soon as the victory is won, you must keep a closer watch upon yourself than ever, for as some ancient sage has observed, there is something more difficult to bear than adversity, and that is good fortune."

At the re-counts, 49 seats went to the Conservatives and 56 to the Republicans. All told, the Chamber contained 340

[1] The residence of the President of the Republic; the term is often used metaphorically for "Presidential policy" and the like, *cp.* our "Downing Street."—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

Republicans, of whom 98 belonged to the Extreme Left, 194 to the Left, 48 to the Left Centre and 22 to the Constitutionalists.

On March 8 the seals of office were handed over. Jules Grévy was elected President of the Chamber, and the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier, President of the Senate.

The victory of the Republican party did not blind Gambetta to the peril from without. On March 3, 1876, he writes to Ranc, who had taken refuge in Brussels after being sentenced to death by default (unpublished letter): "I must confess I am driven to distraction by our everlasting squabbles over personal matters, the perpetual clash of private interests. How can I do anything for my country's good when my hands are tied like this? What a time for petty wrangling! We are in a state of utter chaos; everything is at sixes and sevens All this time, Germany is growing stronger and Bismarck has the whip-hand. You will notice, too, that every time he cracks his whip it is just after some piece of diplomatic bungling on our part. We are always at the mercy of some 'incident.' What would become of us if we had not learnt to dodge these blows, if we were as innocent as when we fell into the trap of the forged telegram from Ems?

"Here is another trap that the Chancellor is preparing to spring upon us! He is putting out feelers through the journalist Muller, his factotum, who in various newspaper articles and other published writings has outlined a scheme for the abolition of war among the Powers. To think that *Bismarck* should launch this project of eternal peace and goodwill among the nations is simply staggering—especially when you consider that all the time the German schoolmaster in Alsace-Lorraine is running the anti-French campaign for all it is worth, impressing it upon the young idea of Germany that the youth of France are detestable, immoral, ought to be wiped off the face of the earth, to be crushed out of existence as the hereditary foe. Germany has a friendly feeling for the young men of every country except France.

"As far as I can see—since we cannot arm ourselves to the teeth—there is only one thing to be done if we wish to avoid

the terrible conflict that is brewing: that is, to let the people have full details of this pacifist scheme, which of course is only a ruse of the Chancellor's. There may yet prove to be something stronger than that will of iron: the will of the masses. . . . Will the other nations rise up in revolt against this barbarism?"

Duclerc tried to bridge the gulf between Gambetta and MacMahon, but the soldier had his orders: he was not to let the "Radicals" pass through, and for him it was a question of honour. At De Broglie's instance he sent for Dufaure as successor to Buffet. Dufaure was not a man whom people cared to fall foul of: a regular wild boar, who could deal shrewd blows with his tusks; he was now seventy-eight, but well qualified for office by his sane and robust eloquence, his merciless logic and his undisputed probity.

Gambetta issued a clarion-call for the massing of all the Republican forces. They had been united when he led them to battle; he wished them to remain united in the hour of victory. "Parties are made by ideas," he wrote to Ranc, "groups by interests." A different view, however, found acceptance through the agency of Jules Ferry. In order to maintain unity, he alleged—a real, not a sham unity—they should keep up their distinctions; this did not imply that the party would be divided, it would be strengthened through being classified; discipline, without which the parliamentary system is mere anarchy and chaos, could only be acquired and preserved by means of separate, well-defined, homogeneous groups; the extremes could only be brought together through the action of the intermediate elements. This meant proceeding by stages and going slow where Gambetta urged the need for rapid advance.

At this moment Gambetta perhaps did not make enough allowance for the obstructiveness of men and things. Genius, in politics, is an infinite capacity for biding one's time, but his fortunes had been such that he had not learnt this lesson. Whether to act or not to act, whether to speak or not to speak, when one should wait and be silent—all this hardly lay within his ken. Everything had turned out well for him, even his

defeats. Since he led the movement, since his was almost the only voice that was heard, since he was hailed as the leader and was fast becoming the leader of the majority in the country, he already saw himself leader of the majority, a solid, compact majority, in Parliament, propelling the Republic into action, driving her under full steam. Such was the future as he mapped it out. But how many obstacles were still to be overcome! The road was not clear; in this great Republican party there were colours that refused to blend, divergences of origin and of temperament, ambitions and egotisms that would not be denied, and finally that longing to be "different from the rest" which is so ineradicable a trait of certain public men. There was Thiers, whose ambition was whetted by age. There was Grévy, as cold and reserved to outward appearance as Gambetta was fiery and demonstrative. There was Jules Ferry, who had no intention of letting himself be merged. There were the members of the Extreme Left, for whom Gambetta was becoming too much of a time-server. There was the Senate, in which the National Assembly was enjoying a new lease of life, not only in the person of its President, D'Audiffret-Pasquier, a sort of tribune of the aristocracy, impatient of control, all nerves and quicksilver—not only in the Right, but also in the Left, led by Jules Simon, supple, wheedling, cat-like, with his claws always ready to scratch. There was the Elysée, looking on with a suspicious eye: the Marshal as "faithful watchdog of the Conservative interests," still prompted by the Duc de Broglie; a world in which the Left were treated as intruders, and felt like fish out of the water. Gambetta now showed his hand too clearly. He was not used to contrary winds, and here were reefs and breakers. He could not always keep his temper, and too often gave his enemies a handle for attack.

At this time he was not as yet truly representative of average opinion in the country. His influence, though much discussed, carried no decisive weight; he was not so strong as he was to become a few months later, when his adversaries, by pitting him against the Marshal, had added to his prestige and revived his popularity. In vain did he do his utmost to

appear moderate, pliable, accommodating; his programme, in which the separation of Church and State still figured, at any rate as a likely contingency, was too advanced for the bulk of the community and for the Republican party. It was a programme that had to wait, as he himself was forced to recognise; it could not be carried out at once.

For the time being he had to be satisfied with the Presidency of the Budget Committee (April 2). The tribune, scoffed at by his enemies as an empty windbag, all rant and rhetoric, was now to handle affairs, to deal with realities, to gain a mastery of detail. He lost no time in getting into touch with military problems, working hard to secure better conditions for officers, N.C.O.s and men, and becoming the most prominent figure in Army debates. Furthermore, he induced the Committee to approve a scheme for an income-tax.

He chafed, however, at his inability to act, especially in the sphere of foreign policy. Bismarck's retort to the framing of the Constitution, the establishment of the Republic on a firmer basis, and the proposal for increasing the Army cadres had taken the form of a new threat; England and Russia had parried the blow. The cloud had lifted for the moment. The Emperor William complained: "It's exasperating to see Thiers joining forces with Gambetta, one simply can't understand it." Gambetta was anxious to take advantage of the respite, to abandon the haphazard course that had hitherto been followed and march straight ahead. France's absorption in her internal struggles, her utter failure to grasp the situation, nearly drove him to despair. His eyes were always riveted on Europe. An active, far-seeing diplomacy was what he craved.

As early as 1874, in a letter to Mme. Adam, he had outlined the future of the Jugo-Slav peoples. "A day will come when we shall have to grapple with the German monster and imprison him within a ring of Latins and Slavs. It is by joining hands with the Southern Slavs and those of the Lower Danube that we shall lay the foundations for a victory over the motley Germanic Empires. Those sturdy Serbs are

getting ready to play their part as the Piedmontese of the Near East. . . . When once the South Slavs are welded together into a State, the Prussian dictatorship of Europe will be a thing of the past."

At the same time, before the scare of 1875 and the Tsar's intervention in favour of France, he was glancing at Austria. He had hopes of persuading her to break loose from Prussia. "You believe in Russia," he wrote to Ranc (an unpublished letter, May 3, 1874), "you favour an alliance with her. Well, between ourselves, let me tell you what I have in mind, something quite different: to see whether we cannot disengage Austria from the bonds that are tightening between her and Prussia."

As regards the principle of nationality, which, if strictly applied, would resolve such nations as Belgium and Switzerland into their component parts and saddle us with an Empire of a hundred million souls on our frontiers; his views have not changed since 1863: "Believe me, we must let twenty years elapse before we allow free play to the principle of nationality, with all the results that it entails. . . . This principle cannot but serve to upset the balance of Europe, to entangle and perplex still further the relations between the Powers. . . . I prefer the European balance as conceived by diplomatists at the end of the eighteenth century before the Revolution. . . . We shall have to educate public opinion towards an alliance between France and Austria." As far back as 1715, Louis XIV. had hinted at this idea to the Comte de Luc, his Ambassador in Vienna, and it had been taken up again by Choiseul. "Austria might be reminded of her rivalry with Prussia throughout the wars of the Revolution and of the Empire, and induced to forget the alliances, the treaties and the common interests by which the two Powers are linked together."

He went on to remark, in another letter that has not been published: "There is springing up in Austria a party which, in order to break away from Prussia, shows sympathetic leanings towards France. It cuts me to the quick to see our statesmen turn aside with scorn from this path of safety. A

Franco-Austrian alliance might quite conceivably prevent war, and would in any case be the only effective means of resistance to the grasping designs of Prussia. . . . It will be our own fault if we find ourselves attacked by an Austro-Prussian combination! I have the gloomiest forebodings for the future, for the generations that we want to save from these horrors."

The following year, when the scare was at its height, he wrote to Ranc: "The forger of the Ems telegram is planning another treacherous stroke. Our coolness, our self-possession will keep us from falling into the trap as we did in 1870. . . . Bismarck has managed to transform a weak and disunited Germany into a strong and well-ordered Empire. Less judicious, both for him and for us, was his policy of insisting on the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, a policy fraught with the seeds of destruction for his work. At the stage of civilisation which we have reached, it is impossible to conquer nations against their will. Material victory has never been followed by moral dominance. And there, in Alsace-Lorraine, the populations torn from our side, moulded by all that is most chivalrous and most alluring in French culture, refuse to be wooed by the charms of Germanisation, 'charms' of brutality, of ignominious serfdom, 'charms' that they fail to appreciate. The more the superiority of Greater Germany is dinned into their ears, the more do they sigh for what they have lost. Germany has struck a cruel blow at the very heart of Europe. Until she has atoned for this crime, no one will sheathe the sword. The peace of the world, so vital a necessity for every nation, will constantly remain at the mercy of any untoward incident."

The attitude of Austria, now that she was more and more becoming Germany's vassal, led him to gravitate towards a Franco-Russian connection. Moreover, looking far ahead, he hoped that the gulf between England and Russia might be bridged:

"Russia's political aims seem likely to be impeded by Austria, who has already begun to assume a hostile front. She is bringing Roumania within the orbit of her influence.

Can you see all this culminating in an alliance between Austria, Roumania, and Turkey against Russia? What a conflict that would mean! To the Prince of Wales, however, the prospect seems by no means remote. He does not share the anti-Russian feeling displayed by a certain section of his countrymen. He throws all the weight of his youthful authority into the scale against any step that might prove harmful to Russia's interests. In my opinion, he has the makings of a notable statesman. He condemns the too widely prevalent attitude towards the Chancellor who, for his part, treats all alike with the same high-handedness as ever. I want to see our enemies become Russia's enemies as well. It is clear as daylight that Bismarck is angling for an alliance with Austria. I think that before long England and Russia will be on our side, if only we adopt a suitable policy at home."

He already points out the signal importance of the Roumanian question: "It is impossible to understand the successive phases of the Eastern Question, on which perhaps the solution of the Franco-German problem may some day depend, without paying special attention to the Roumanian question. The Roumanian question is one of European significance."

On June 2, 1875, he writes to Ranc (unpublished letter): "The Austrians are growing more and more irksome to the inhabitants of the occupied regions. It seems as if they were secretly conscious that their occupation is only an encampment, and that they will soon be driven out. They squeeze the country dry; their armies, as they retire, make a wilderness of the districts they abandon. It is the Hungarians who are creating a Roumanian question by their oppressive methods of government. Magyar Chauvinism is the root of the trouble. A constant factor in the evolution of the Eastern Question, on whatever lines it may proceed, is the danger to Roumania, in any Balkan War, either of a Russian invasion if Austria-Hungary holds to her neutrality, or of an Austro-Hungarian occupation. The Eastern Question cannot therefore be considered apart from the Roumanian problem."

To Ranc, on March 20, 1876 (unpublished): "Roumania is on the high road towards concluding a military pact with Russia. It is our duty to have a finger in this pie, and to express to both nations our secret sympathy with an understanding that is not yet public property. But who is there in France that bothers his head about foreign politics? Yet to follow Russia in the future and Roumania at the present juncture is for us a matter of supreme moment. I can contemplate, in Eastern Europe, a revision of frontiers which would unite all the Roumanians in the Roumanian Kingdom. By 'all the Roumanians' I mean those of Bukovina, of Hungary, of Serbia, and of Macedonia as well."

He points out the blunders of European diplomacy with regard to Hungary and the danger of Budapest's drawing closer to Berlin: "From the dawn of its history, Hungary has been governed in its own peculiar fashion. The Estates that administered the country had more real control than the Kings. They deeply resented the German yoke. They would eagerly have seized the opportunity of shaking it off, but they ought not to have had a foreign monarch thrust upon them. If Napoleon had guaranteed the Hungarians their independence, it would have been safe to let them alone; they would have secured their emancipation themselves. And then, no doubt, we should never have had 1870, *and we should be free from the menace of the colossal war that is looming on the horizon. . . .*"

To the same correspondent, on May 25 (unpublished letter): "How shall we get the Republicans to realise that these internal struggles prevent us from settling the frontier question? Even X—— and Z—— cannot see further than the end of their noses. It is useless to ask them about anything outside their ordinary political routine. What allies are we trying to win? What do we do in the way of making approaches towards Russia and England?"

In September he takes a trip to Germany. He comes back convinced that the German army is stronger and more formidable than ever: "We must keep calm," he says, "and pay the utmost attention to the military and naval Estimates."

He writes to Ruiz, his correspondent in Rome, on November 2, 1876: "Bismarck's main idea is to make the Danube Austria's centre of gravity."

To Ranc, on February 10, 1877 (unpublished letter): "A note of the Prussian Chancellor's, which I will let you have in a *verbatim* copy as soon as possible, aims at pushing back the Hapsburg dynasty into the Slav territories, in order to bring them into active contact with Russia. This gives us our cue: to work hand in hand with Russia, to associate ourselves with her schemes, *and to modify them if the need arise.* On the other side, Germany will remain the predominant partner in the alliance with Austria until the day comes—as I hope it will come—when the grinding weight of her brutality provokes a reaction. To bring it home to the Hapsburgs that the Hohenzollerns are using them to strengthen the fabric of German unity—what man in France is equal to such a task? How I long to realise my ambition for the greater glory of our country: to bring about a Franco-Russian agreement; to break up the Hapsburg-Hohenzollern alliance; to draw Italy nearer to France! The chief business is to isolate that appalling menace, the Hohenzollern dynasty. The Hapsburgs accept the Hohenzollern yoke with a smile on their lips, but with bitterness in their hearts. In Roumania there is nothing but hatred for the Hungarian, the Magyar. In spite of this feeling, Roumania will swing to and fro between the Germanic Powers and Russia. Are we merely to be lookers-on at the drama that is unfolding?"

A little later he adds (unpublished letter): "The Chancellor has managed to persuade Italy that her interests are identical with Germany's. It lies within our power to open Italy's eyes. From now on, Germany will thwart her every attempt to realise her aims. Italy will resent this. We shall then be able to take advantage of her resentment and lure her away from the Germanic Powers. A league of the Latin races might even now be formed, with three centres, Rome, Paris, and Madrid."

On January 17, 1878, he writes to Ruiz (unpublished): "So far as we are concerned, peace remains our guiding

principle. A day will come when Fortune will play into our hands. We shall not venture again upon external action except for the purpose of restoring order in Europe and setting right once more on its throne. Till then, it will be enough for us to preserve unity among the sister races and to develop our strength."

To sum up then: the forecast that sooner or later Europe was certain to be set ablaze; Germany's need of using Austria as a tool in her schemes of penetration, peaceful and warlike; a probable understanding between Austria and Turkey; on the other side, an inevitable alliance between France, England and Russia; the importance of the Eastern Question, on which perhaps the solution of the Franco-German quarrel will come to depend; a welding together of the Latin peoples—France, Italy, Spain, Roumania—and of the Slav races; a strenuous effort to sever the bonds between Vienna and Berlin—such is the programme, as mirrored in private conversations and letters with Chaudordy, that Gambetta, during those months of 1876 and 1877, confides to his friends; a programme of singular insight and wisdom, dictated alike by geography and by history, but utterly ignored by all around him, since France was wrapped up in her internal disputes. It was the great political combination which the logic of events was destined to effect forty-four years later. We shall see how in his public utterances he was compelled to weaken his programme and to make concessions that were not always understood.

At the same moment several members of the Left, at the risk of blasting all hopes for a revival of our strength, proposed that the term of military service should be cut down. Gambetta, in agreement with Thiers, combated this move. His prime concern, since 1870, had been to restore France to her former rank in Europe; hence his stubborn determination that our people should be induced to make the necessary sacrifices for the improvement of the army.

CHAPTER XV

THE SIXTEENTH OF MAY

The Jules Simon Ministry—The 363—The Battle—Death of Thiers—Elections of October 14th, 1877—Fall of Broglie—Léonie Léon.

THE Dufaure Cabinet, caught between the devil of the Chamber and the deep sea of the Senate, had fallen; the Marshal had sent for Jules Simon. A general meeting of the Catholic committees was to be held on April 3. The Government announced that it would not sanction this meeting, which at the time was illegal (there was as yet no Disestablishment Act to grant Bishops and Catholics in general the right to hold meetings without let or hindrance). This Government ukase was not considered valid, and an Address was sent to the Pope in the following terms: "Your Holiness, in claiming the independence of his ministers, will be upholding the cause of all Catholic peoples and especially that of France, the eldest daughter of the Church." A petition to the various public authorities was then drawn up: "In view of the grave plight in which the Papacy now finds itself, the undersigned request you to use every means in your power to ensure that the independence of the Holy Father shall be respected," etc. The Bishop of Nevers urged the Marshal to "break off all connection with the Italian revolution," and sent an official rescript to the mayors and justices of the peace in his diocese, asking them to endorse his attempt to "make these views prevail in the councils of the nation." Jules Simon condemned the petitions and the episcopal rescripts.

On May 1 an interpellation was made by all the groups of the Left. Jules Simon defended the action of the Italian Government: "The statement that the Pope is a prisoner is

inaccurate. These repeated assertions are, shall I say 'false'? shall I say 'mendacious'? I will go no further than to say 'seriously exaggerated.'" He proceeded to read out the text of the law of guarantees.

Gambetta replied (May 4): "The question is not a religious but a political one; in the name of religion the whole State system is being attacked. Those who lead this assault upon our institutions are at the head of the Catholic leagues." He quotes a Papal brief granting a prelate, the Chancellor of Lille University, the power "to confer degrees and even to depute this right." He demands the observance of the acts put in force by M. de Vatimesnil, by Mgr. de Frayssinons, by Charles X.'s Government, by that of Louis Philippe, by the Empire. "Show the courage of your convictions, and say outright that it is only the Republic that should not have the privilege of defending itself!" Then comes the famous peroration, the rallying-cry to battle: "There is one thing no less abhorrent to this country than the old *régime*, and that is to see clericalism in the saddle. I am only voicing the sentiments of the French people when I repeat what my friend Peyrat once said: 'Clericalism, there is the enemy!'" By clericalism he means the interference of the clergy in political struggles, that often ill-timed activity which, as we have seen in the course of this narrative, gave even partisans of the Right grounds for complaint. How often Gambetta himself had drawn a distinction between religion and clerical meddling in political affairs! How often he had proclaimed his respect for freedom of conscience, for freedom of worship, for the national priesthood! But in these great battles, words and blows often carry men beyond their objective and may even injure non-combatants. Parties always find it to their advantage to overdraw the picture, whether for praise or for blame. The Conservatives, hard pressed, declared that their opponents had flung down the gauntlet to the Church. The enemies of faith were not averse to this interpretation, and the orthodox were able to assume an air of martyrdom. Thus, as so often in our country, extremes were drawn to each other by a sort of magnetic pull, and fanned each other's passions.

An article was published in Mgr. Dupanloup's *Défense* alleging that Jules Simon had received instructions to break with the Left, and next day in the House a certain deputy brought the matter to the Prime Minister's notice. "My honour is at stake," was Jules Simon's comment, "since the writer of the article labours under the impression that when I came down to the House to speak, it is not with the motive of expressing my own views, but in obedience to a command that has been laid upon my tongue and my conscience. This person simply does not know an honest man when he sees one"—here he tore up, threw down and stamped upon the copy of the *Défense* which he had in his hand—"is he casts aspersions on the honour and the truthfulness of a man who for forty years has spoken his mind without reserve on every possible occasion, and has told the truth according to his lights, without regard to the consequences." Then seeking to remain in the good books of the Elysée: "The honoured name of the President of the Republic has been brought into this article. So there is a slander on him as well as on me. The profound esteem which, in spite of political disagreements, I have always felt for the President's character has only increased since I have had the honour to come into closer contact with him, and I welcome this opportunity of saying that his political conduct fills me more and more every day with respectful admiration."

The Left moved the following resolution: "That this House, maintaining that the Ultramontane activities, whose renewed outbreak may jeopardise the internal security of the country, are a flagrant breach of the State laws, calls upon the Government to employ all the legal means at its disposal for the repressing of this unpatriotic agitation. . . ." The word "confidence" was not inserted in the text. The resolution was supported by Gambetta. Jules Simon tried to have a vote of confidence embodied in the resolution, but was unsuccessful. The resolution was carried by 346 votes to 114.

The Pope took exception not so much to Gambetta as to Jules Simon, and not so much to Jules Simon's speech as to his reply. On May 11 he remarked to a party of French

pilgrims who had come to Rome: "Whichever way we look in Europe, the prospect is far from hopeful. What reason have we for hope, indeed, when in official quarters the truth of the Pope's words is flatly denied and he is called a liar?" (this was a direct allusion to Jules Simon's epithet, "mendacious"). "Such language is altogether unseemly, and a disgrace to a Catholic Government."

A few days later the Ultramontane newspaper *Germania* spoke in no uncertain tones: "The French Prime Minister has given the lie direct to the Pope, and his Holiness cannot swallow this insult. He has made up his mind to act. The Papal Nuncio has received orders to inform Marshal MacMahon that the Vatican has decided to break off all relations with France, if M. Jules Simon remains in the Cabinet." The newspaper added: "The Pope has issued his orders, and he has been obeyed." As a matter of fact, there had been an exchange of letters on the subject between the Vatican and the President.

The President was exasperated. His satellites could wait no longer. The municipal councils in all the boroughs and half the general councils in all the departments and *arrondissements* had to be renewed in this very year 1877, and a third of the Senate a little later. They had weapons in their hands, there was nothing for it but to use them. The first pretext that offered itself would be seized.

On May 5 came the debate on the municipal reform bill. The main stress was laid on the publication of reports of council meetings, which was approved. Jules Simon was ill, and did not take part in the debate. On the 15th the bill for the regulation of the Press was discussed. The Right upheld the principle that misdemeanours of the Press should be subject to police-court proceedings. It called upon Jules Simon for an explanation; he made a discreet reference to the embarrassing position in which he was placed by the Marshal's attitude. The bill was thrown out by 377 votes to 55.

Next day, Jules Simon received the famous letter from the President reproaching him for not having fought against these two measures: "In view of this inaction on the part of

the leader of the Cabinet, the question arises whether he still has enough influence in the House to make his views prevail. An explanation is urgently needed; for I am not, like you, responsible to Parliament; I am responsible to France, and this responsibility was never more pressing than it is to-day."

Jules Simon went to the Marshal to tender his resignation. "We have come to the parting of the ways, you and I," said MacMahon. "I would rather be turned out of office than continue to take my orders from M. Gambetta." And he decided to appeal to the country, asking the Senate for a dissolution.

The act of May 16, 1877, if not illegal, was undoubtedly against the spirit of the Constitution, for the blow was struck at a Cabinet which had a majority in the two Chambers, and the President's letter was not countersigned by a responsible Minister. A hole had been torn in the Constitution at the very outset. Instead of a normal appeal to the country, in accordance with the English plan, France was confronted with an exercise of personal authority which had certainly not been foreseen when the new State system was devised.

Many years later, Jules Simon, in the course of a witty and spirited eulogy of Marshal MacMahon, wrote: "I have a grievance against him. When he dismissed me on that sixteenth of May, he sinned against the rules of Parliamentary procedure and the rules of courtesy. I can forgive him for the second offence, which to me is still inexplicable."

A stranger to the world of statecraft, Marshal MacMahon had brought into political life all the loyalty of his nature and all the virtues of his profession. Under the Empire, returning from Italy in a blaze of glory, he had spoken in the Senate against the General Security Act.[1] He was a Gallican. But the hero of Malakoff and Magenta was more fitted to handle an army than a political machine. A soldier at the head in civil affairs, civilian interference in matters of strategy—these are two fatal mistakes.

Thus, at the moment when the Republicans were already

[1] A sort of "Defence of the Realm Act," passed after Orsini's attempt to assassinate Napoleon III. in 1858, and bestowing upon the Home Secretary somewhat vague and elastic powers to deport political suspects.—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

beginning to split up, the Opposition came to their rescue and forced them to close their ranks again.

In face of the danger that threatened, the united front which Gambetta had vainly counselled in the previous year formed itself spontaneously. He emphasised the need for keeping cool, and carried a resolution which recalled men's minds to the true maxims of Parliamentary government. That very evening he wrote: "War has been declared; they have challenged us to the fray. Our position is impregnable; we occupy the high ground of the law."

Next day, in the Chamber, there was no Ministry. A note informed the House that the Marshal "had resolved to take strong measures against Ultramontane intrigues." "Why, that's just what we want!" exclaimed Gambetta. He then paid a tribute to the President's loyalty and patriotism: "Do not turn your back on the Constitution, do not listen to the sinister promptings of advisers who will not help you to cope with the havoc that they themselves will have wrought. Beware lest, behind these schemes for a dissolution, the country should scent other designs, and should cry: 'The dissolution is a prelude to war!' Criminal indeed would be those who worked for it in that spirit!"

"The dissolution as a prelude to war!" For this phrase he was severely taken to task. Nor was the censure undeserved, for it is always a misguided policy to drag the foreigner into our internal quarrels. Unfortunately, it was not the first time in our history that this course had been pursued, and it had been condemned by Gambetta himself. These deplorable feuds have broken out in all ages and in all countries. Parties are merciless. The truth is that Bismarck, involved in a fight to the death against the Catholics and the Papacy, dreaded the establishment in France of a *régime* which would have given them support. Italy was in like case; King Victor Emmanuel's journey to Berlin had been determined upon the very day after the Frohsdorf interview. Alarm was naturally felt in Rome at every sign that augured for the restoration of the temporal power. On May 19 the prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes department drew attention to a massing

of troops and war material at Ventimiglia, and the official Press beyond the Alps announced that a great artillery park was being formed at Piacenza and that Spezzia was being fortified; these statements were bluff, perhaps, but could not be altogether disregarded.

The Marshal once more summoned the Duc de Broglie, and the sittings of the Chamber were suspended for a month, which gave the Republicans time to organise their forces. "Keep to the path of legality," was the advice given to the Chamber by its President, Grévy, "keep to it with wisdom, with firmness, with confidence."

The Left laid their heads together. "It must be made known to the world," said Gambetta, "that we are the whole Republican party united in defence of political freedom." A member: "Like the 221!"[1] "In reminding us of the Restoration period," replied Gambetta, "this gentleman has hit the mark, for we are faced with arrogant claims much like those of Polignac." Spuller drew up a manifesto: "In five months at the outside, the voice of France will be heard. The country will not go back upon its former decision. The Republic will emerge from the ordeal of the polls stronger than ever." The manifesto was signed by 363 members.

On May 21 Gambetta writes to Ruiz, in Rome (unpublished): "We may have as much as five months to waste, but there is a consoling feature: the Marshal is losing three years of power. Looking upon his fall as a foregone conclusion, I think that we may well see the Congress appoint his successor within a few months from now. My mind is made up; in order to checkmate the schemes of my opponents, who fancy that it is a master-stroke on their part to raise the dilemma of choosing between the Marshal and me, I have decided that, when the favourable moment comes, I shall put forward Grévy as a candidate. I shall thus have the advantage of holding serenely aloof from the struggle, of guiding public opinion towards an impersonal solution and, if I

[1] The 221 Liberal deputies who in March, 1830, addressed a sort of "Grand Remonstrance" to Charles X., and demanded the dismissal of the reactionary Polignac Ministry.—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

succeed, of putting an end to military control and ensuring that the civilian spirit shall prevail in the counsels of the State. What we have to fear is not some violent coup—this I consider, for several reasons, out of the question—but the foreigner, who is watching us closely and may profit by our political and military disorder. I cannot gauge Germany's designs from here, but I am afraid that she is capable of anything. The spirit of ambition that has become the very breath of her being might lead her to embark in all recklessness upon some terrible adventure."

Abroad, the step taken on May 16 met with a good deal of adverse criticism, especially in Germany and Italy. Nor was it hailed with any great enthusiasm by the Comte de Paris, the Prince de Joinville, the Duc d'Aumale and their associates, the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier and the rest. The Bonapartists were working for a revolution. One day, when the question of attempting some bold stroke was being discussed in the presence of the Comte de Paris, he exclaimed: "If necessary, I shall take up a rifle to defend the Constitution, and the liberties of my country!" (*Souvenirs d'Estancelin et de M. de Limbourg*). The more clear-sighted did not believe that the manœuvre would succeed. Taine wrote: "The more I think over the Marshal's latest action, the more injudicious does it appear. It is like the charge at Reichshoffen[1] after the battle was lost. The elections will send him back a Chamber just as Radical as the present one, or even worse. He will find himself forced to resign. I can see Gambetta becoming President of the Republic four months from now." (May 21.)

The Government made arrangements for the official candidatures throughout the country, removed the administrative and judicial personnel as from May 24, threatened with dismissal the lesser functionaries suspected of devotion to the Republic, enforced a supervision of restaurants and public-houses, withdrew the licences for newsvending, called upon the courts of justice to take proceedings against the Republican Press, forbade the representatives of the army to

[1] MacMahon commanded an army corps in this battle (August, 1870).—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

attend the Hoche celebration banquet, and endeavoured to thwart the propaganda of the Left in speech and in writing.

Gambetta got together the political directors of the great Paris newspapers, Emile de Girardin, Adrien Hébrard, Jourde, Jules Bapst, Edmond About and Auguste Vacquerie, and organised with them a committee for opposition and propaganda. Mme Adam's drawing-room became a headquarters thronged by the veterans of the Republic and the new party that had gathered in their wake. There he met Edmond de La Fayette, Lasteyrie, Duclerc, De Marcère, Lesseps, and a number of foreign politicians.

He now took the field for action. On June 9 he spoke at Amiens, where men's hearts could still be stirred by memories of the invasion. "The country is sure of itself, but there is no self-confidence in those who started this enterprise! Every trader, every manufacturer, every business man was at once amazed and indignant, and asked himself whether these would-be Conservatives were not the fomenters of perpetual disorder!"

On June 10, at Abbeville, he calls attention to a most ominous symptom: the spectre of personal power rising up with the Republican Constitution. He hurls anathema at those who are working for a *coup d'état*: "Who are these people who dare to implicate the name of the Army and the sacred interests for which it stands in Heaven knows what infamous conspiracy?"

On June 16 the Marshal addressed to the Senate a message demanding a dissolution. In the Chamber Fourtou, the Home Secretary, took the offensive. After reading Gambetta's declaration of faith in 1869, he added: "We should have either to throw the country into confusion or to break our word: those are the alternatives before us! It is the Marshal who, by forestalling a Convention, is saving the Constitution. We are the France of 1789, ranged in battle order against the France of 1793. You have been lavish with your promises to the country: where is your performance?" But an unlucky phrase was to stem the current of this impassioned oratory. "You have gone so far as to

assert," he went on, "that the Act of May 16 was a menace to external peace, forgetting that the men who are in the Government to-day were returned at the polls in 1871, that they were members of that Assembly which, we may say, brought peace to the country and deliverance to the occupied regions. . . ." At these words Gambetta sprang up, and, pointing with outstretched forefinger, cried out in a resonant voice that filled the whole Chamber: "*There* is the deliverer of the occupied regions!" The Left rose from their seats and repeated his gesture and his words. From two-thirds of the benches the deputies leapt to their feet. The cry was re-echoed again and again, the Ministerial benches cheered, even the Strangers' Gallery joined in the uproar. Grévy, the President of the Chamber, motionless, looking towards Thiers, seemed to be paying him the same compliment. Thiers remained in his seat among the benches of the Left; his head bent, his eyes half-shut and moist with tears, his hands crossed over his chest, he accepted this sudden ovation, while at the rostrum Fourtou, though betraying no emotion, seemed completely tongue-tied. "The deliverer of the occupied regions!" He whom they had called "Raving maniac!" had paid off old scores.

Gambetta replied. In the midst of an indescribable din he wrestled with his foes for three hours. He was never in better form than when the fray was at its hottest. He argued that they showed little respect for the Marshal in pitting him, Gambetta, against the President of the Republic. The excitement was at its highest pitch when he spoke of the situation in Italy. "You have no right to bring the foreigner into our discussions!" someone shouted. Gambetta flashed out in retort: "We have the right and the duty to make it known beyond the Alps that if by a temporary mishap the government of France should fall into dubious hands, the nation would disown such rulers!" And, as a parting shot: "We shall go out 363, we shall come back 400!" A resolution of want of confidence in the Ministry was carried by 363 votes to 158.

In the Senate the Duc de Broglie spoke in favour of a

dissolution: "The electors will have to choose between Marshal MacMahon and the dictator of Bordeaux, the orator of Belleville,[1] who can barely hold in check the seething mobs of Radicalism and the upward movement of new social strata." It was thus that his adversaries, by their very taunts, enhanced his reputation.

The more moderate Senators opposed a dissolution. "You have deliberately arranged this game, and you will lose it," René Bérenger protested. "You are playing into the hands of the extremists, and the moderates cry out in anger that you are ruining their work." "A plebiscite will be held," said Laboulaye. "The people will be asked to decide between the Marshal and the Republic. The word 'Marshal' will signify all that the Republic does not stand for. You are bound to fail. Who will take up the cudgels for a Government that has no name, no general policy? Such an idea is mere moonshine. . . . You live in a world of society drawing-rooms. Society drawing-rooms are the worst possible sources of inspiration, a sort of irresponsible clubs, remote from all actualities. You will have failed, and you will have placed the Marshal on the horns of a dilemma: to eat humble-pie or to abdicate." By 149 votes to 130 the Government was authorised to dissolve the Chamber. On June 22 Grévy, before announcing the decree of dissolution to the House, addressed it in these words: "The country to which you must now make your appeal will say that this Parliament, in its all too brief career, has never ceased for a single day to deserve well of France and of the Republic."

Gambetta wrote to Ruiz (unpublished): "The position is clear. The Marshal has been driven into a blind alley; he must either yield or vanish from the scene. I fancy they are already regretting their crazy enterprise. Our adversaries show obvious signs of preparing for a climb down. You can hear them reiterate, in every key, that in all this they have had no other end in view than to uphold the Constitution,

[1] Belleville, Gambetta's constituency, is a rough quarter of Paris; the famous Limehouse" taunt which used to be levelled at Mr. Lloyd George is somewhat similar.—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

to preserve peace and (save the mark!) freedom of thought. They are feeling their way, they dare not take the plunge. The extremist sections are already dissatisfied, and the Cabinet is splitting up. There are those who would like to proceed to any lengths, who do not shrink from violence; there are those who would like to make terms, to patch up the quarrel, and to escape the terrible reckoning that is at hand. Whatever happens, the ultimate issue is not in doubt; we shall emerge victorious from the ordeal."

The clash of arms began. Gambetta proclaimed that the Republicans were united under one standard, from Thiers and Dufaure to Victor Hugo and Louis Blanc. At Lille, on August 15, he prophesied that one of two things would happen. (As a matter of fact, both events came to pass, one after the other.) "When the sovereign voice of France has spoken, they will have either to give in or give up." He was always ready in this way with some arresting phrase, some trenchant epigram, which summed up the situation, became a rallying-cry, and was not easily forgotten. Lamartine says of Mirabeau: "His ringing phrases became the proverbs of the Revolution." One might say of Gambetta that his ringing phrases became the proverbs of the Republic. Never had this great leader of men displayed such energy.

The Government decided that judicial proceedings should be taken against Gambetta for insults to the Marshal. *Le Soleil*, the Orleanist organ, protested: "The trial will do us just as much harm as the speech did; it will only give him a splendid advertisement." Gambetta was sentenced by default to three months' imprisonment and a fine of 2,000 francs. But he managed to drag the affair out so skilfully that the new Chamber met, and his immunity as a Member of Parliament came to his rescue before the sentence could be carried into effect.

Thiers was drawing nearer and nearer to Gambetta. He now entertained the idea of summoning him to office as soon as he himself was reappointed President, and of "introducing him to Europe." On September 3, however, his plans were cut short by death.

Gambetta was horror-struck at the news: "When I think of all that this frightful calamity may lead to, I need all the confidence that I feel in France's firmness to refrain from shuddering. It is a bolt from the blue. I had been expecting M. Thiers at five o'clock this evening; he sent me word that he was ill, and at half-past six he was dead!" . . . Paris gave her former President a magnificent funeral. "Never should I have dared to hope for so dazzling a triumph. I have witnessed the most imposing ceremony of a century which has seen so many splendid pageants. Those who took part in it are determined to ensure the victory of our cause. It has revealed the impotence of those who dream of a revolution, and proved to them that they will soon get their marching orders. What could be at once more unexpected and more reassuring than that enthusiastic Paris crowd, riddled and raked by M. Thiers' gunfire six years ago, and now showing enough discernment and patriotism to forgive the victor and enrol him among the immortals?"

The drawing up of the list of official candidates was a long and arduous process. The "white ticket" candidates included 240 Bonapartists, 98 Legitimists, and 27 Orleanists. On September 19 the Marshal issued a manifesto: "Hard-fought elections would serve to embitter the conflict. My duties would grow more onerous as the danger increased. I can neither become the tool of Radicalism nor desert the post assigned to me by the Constitution. I shall remain, to uphold the Conservative interests with the support of the Senate."

The elections were fixed for October 14. The clergy threw themselves into the fray. The Government was compelled to urge them to suppress their activities through the medium of the prefects (Circulars of October 3 and 6). Six hundred and thirteen municipal councils were dissolved; 1,743 mayors and 1,334 deputy mayors dismissed; 344 clubs, societies, and leagues broken up; 2,067 public-houses closed; 4,779 civil servants suspended and 1,385 dismissed; 421 prosecutions were instituted for Press misdemeanours, 849 for unlicensed newsvending, 216 for booksellers' offences, 170 for seditious

utterances; the sentences, fines and costs amounted to 1,034,353 francs and 46 years, 3 months and 16 days' imprisonment. Fourtou was sanguine of victory. Broglie said: "The silence of the country is terrifying." This son and grandson of enemies of the Empire was led by fear of the democracy into applying Empire methods. But on that road one must either go to the journey's end or fall by the wayside.

In face of this "administrative running amuck" (John Lemoine, *Journal des Débats*), Gambetta, the advocate of legal resistance, the masterly tactician, organised the defence of the Republic as he had organised that of the nation. Presence of mind, fertility of resource, a versatile and persuasive tongue—he had all the gifts, he imparted to all around him something of his own fire, he stirred the country to its depths. At the same time he set an example of discipline and unselfishness. At the Château-d'Eau circus, before an audience of 7,000 electors, he backs Grévy's candidature for the Presidency of the Republic: "This man so rightly respected for his unblemished past, his sterling integrity, a pattern of moderation and wisdom, of loyalty and honour. . . ." He girds at those who, in speaking of the ex-President of the Chamber, declare that he is an unknown figure to the country at large. "In that exalted post he is the first man in France; the national sovereignty is entrusted to his keeping. Set the seal upon your victory by appointing him to the supreme magistracy of France." He, the leader, is generously prepared to play second fiddle to the great Republican whom he classes as his superior: "I remain in the ranks, not wishing to raise myself above men who have devoted a whole lifetime to the service of our party."

On October 14, 317 Republicans were returned to the polls, 293 of them having been among the 363 of the late Parliament; 199 Conservatives, including 99 Legitimists, 44 Bonapartists, and 56 Orleanists. In the *Journal des Débats* the Comte de Montalivet singled out the features of resemblance between the election of the "221" and that of the "363"; similar blunders on the part of the Government—faithfully

adhering, by the way, to the letter of the Constitution—and a similar response from the country.

On October 26 Gambetta said at Château-Chinon: "We can imagine what the elections would have been like had there been no obstacles in the way, no pressure brought to bear." He made an appeal to the eight million farmers who held the fate of the country in the hollow of their hand: "It was not we who started France upon the path of reckless adventure; it is not we who dream of absolutism under a single ruler." Then the familiar refrain on religion and the clergy, an echo from five or six years back, from the speeches in Picardy, at St. Quentin and in Savoy: "It is alleged that we have invented the clerical bogey. Now I have never attacked the Church or its ministers when they confined themselves to their religious and moral sphere. What I have attacked, and always shall attack, is the men who try to make the Church a lever for political power and mastery, when its true function is to help and console."

After the re-counts the Chamber consisted of 326 Republicans and 207 deputies of the Right. The Republicans lost 37 seats, so that their majority had dropped to 119.

The Marshal, realising his defeat, wished to resign, and Fourtou was for following suit. Broglie dissuaded them: he knew that the game was up, but he was valiantly determined to face the final encounter.

The Left proposed the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry into Ministerial acts. Here were Broglie and Gambetta at grips, and with them two worlds, two epochs. A superb and impressive hand-to-hand struggle between the aristocracy and the democracy! Broglie, pluming himself upon his high lineage, with his haughty air, his disdain for the rabble, his polished diction, but hard in manner, his voice unsympathetic, without warmth or grace; the other, all flame and fury, bubbling over with plebeian vitality, scornful of conventions, prone to sweeping gestures and outbursts of wrath and sarcasm: whatever opinion one may have of the men and the times, such combats between opponents of such mettle are a credit to an age and a nation.

Broglie would not hear of an inquiry. He could not regard "a new Committee of Public Safety" as qualified to pass a verdict. He felt that the battle must be fought with a due sense of its importance, and that there must be no hitting below the belt. He took up the challenge: the Sixteenth of May meant war. "To make our neighbours uneasy as regards France's plans, and then to intimidate France with the threat of the foreign peril, that is the manœuvre in a nutshell. I blush for my country!"

Gambetta was no less ready to assume a lofty tone. This mighty argument had been degraded into a sort of personal conflict between the Marshal and him: "No, no, such a plebiscite could not be allowed. I want neither the honour nor the disgrace attached to it. . . ." Scorn matched scorn: "You are behind the times, M. le Duc; you are, and you always have been, an enemy of the democracy, an aristocrat; you come here, with your air of patrician elegance, to dazzle us with your carefully studied epigrams; but you have not told us how it is that M. le Duc de Broglie, formerly the sworn foe of the official candidate system, is carrying out the will of the Bonapartist Party, borrowing from that party its most odious methods, trying to make himself a name among the most skilful election agents of the later Empire!"

The Duc de Broglie sought to resist, to rely upon the Right in the Senate against the majority in the Chamber. But the President of the Senate, the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier, maintained that an interpellation regarding an act of the Chamber was unconstitutional; the Orleanists had little inclination for resistance; the Comte de Paris and the Duc d'Aumale, who had never been greatly in favour of the Sixteenth of May *coup*, were anything but anxious to countenance a new adventure. On November 20 the Ministry handed in their resignation. Then the Marshal, after trying an extra-Parliamentary Cabinet, with General de Rochebouet at its head, a Cabinet with which the Chamber refused to have any dealings, gave up the struggle and sent once more for Dufaure.

On January 7, at Marseilles, Gambetta repeated his declara-

tions of 1869: "I am a Government man, not an Opposition man; for one year of power bears more fruit than ten years of heroic opposition. In January, 1880, we shall have to get past the danger zone of the Senatorial elections; till then no rashness, no quarrelling, no mistakes! Let us call a halt and pitch our camp on the positions we have conquered."

In February Pope Pius IX. breathed his last. In a letter to an intimate friend Gambetta writes: "To-day will be a red-letter day, a peace offer from Berlin and perhaps a complete reconciliation with the Vatican. They have chosen the new Pope: the urbane and subtle-minded Cardinal Pecci, Bishop of Perugia, the Cardinal of whom old Pius IX. was so jealous that shortly before his death he tried to rob him of the tiara by making him Chamberlain. This Italian, more diplomat than priest, has had a hand in all the intrigues of the Jesuits and the foreign clergy in Rome; now he is Pope and the name that he has assumed—Leo XIII.—seems to me a most auspicious omen. I feel sure that we may expect great things from this appointment. He is not openly abandoning the traditions and the expressed views of his predecessor; but his conduct, his acts, his dealing with other Powers count for more than his speeches, and if he does not die too soon we may look forward to more sensible relations with the Church."

Gambetta was well aware that the Concordat of 1801, whose repeal he had demanded in 1869 and again in 1872, could not last for ever, that in this respect Bonaparte's work must be set aside by the Republic. He had, however, too much regard for authority not to be in favour of maintaining the influence of the clergy to a certain extent. He knew that even under a system of disestablishment there are several points of contact, both internal and external, between Church and State. He realised that the religious conflict, even if it kept his own party together, was bringing about a split in the nation, and that for the supreme cause the unity of the nation was a vital need. He therefore contemplated the prospect of a new settlement with Rome. He dreamt of coming to terms with Leo XIII., as he had come to terms with the Orleanists

in order to make the Republic, as he had come to terms with the more old-fashioned Republicans in order to make them accept the Senate, as he had come to terms with the Legitimists, and even the Bonapartists, in order to eject the Orleanists from the permanent Senatorial seats, as he was now coming to terms with his Belleville constituents in order to make them accept the middle way in French policy. He was a born diplomat, a past-master in the art of treaty-making, of compromise, of combination. He was complex; at times there appeared in him even a vein of trickery. "What a profession! I have to deceive them all so that I may serve them better!"

The letter concerning Leo XIII. was addressed to a woman with whom he had been deeply in love for several years past, and who had linked her life with his. Before the war he had seen her among the spectators at the Corps Législatif, and soon after the war he had seen her again at the National Assembly. Léonie Léon was the second daughter of an officer who had served at Strasburg under the Duc d'Orléans. She was a devout Catholic withal. She asked for nothing more than to live unknown, in the shadow of her lover and for him alone. This did not mean, however, that she renounced her own personality, that she merged it entirely in his. She knew how to warn him, to calm his transports, to hold him back. In him it was a love of the heart and of the mind, in which the strands of passion and reason were interwoven. He wrote to her every night a full and frank recital of his thoughts and actions during the day. He listened to her advice, asked for her approval in all that he said or did. Keen-witted, gentle, and strong-willed at once, she contrived to exert an ever-growing influence over Gambetta's conduct.

A number of his letters have been published in the *Revue de Paris* (December 1 and 15, 1906, January 1, 1907). Those of 1882, on the eve of his death, are no less ardent than those of 1873 (the correspondence begins in February, 1873). The whole series of letters form a romance that throbs with passion. Here are some characteristic passages:

1874.—"Our souls were never in more complete harmony, and I drink deep draughts of a love such as the most exalted types of the human race have dreamed of. You alone among women have succeeded in lifting me to these dazzling heights of passion and soul-communion."

August 17, 1875.—"For me you are always the steady and clear-sighted mentor; however deeply I probe the various phases of my life since Fate brought us together, I always come upon you as the source of inspiration for my best actions, and I love you as in days of old the enlightened Greeks must have loved their tutelary genius, their own personal Minerva. How many mistakes you have saved me from! What words of wisdom you have often put in my mouth! How often you have taught me not to betray anger or impatience! For all this gracious influence I bless you from the depths of my heart."

March, 1876.—"I owe you the greatest of my triumphs, and I feel in every fibre of my being that I cannot fully achieve them, cannot follow them up, save under your wing."

May 23, 1876.—"You are my moral and intellectual home. I have got so much into the habit of consulting the oracle that I must now always have it close at hand. There is in my love a strong element of fetish-worship, which I must put up with as best I can."

July 2, 1876.—"Where you are so potent, so divine, is in this: that you hold me to my duty, recall me to action, and it is in these renewals of my courage that I fathom the sincerity and the worth of your devotion."

Often there is a profoundly human note, a glimpse of those complex emotions that throw such a revealing light upon his life: "He who has not known the intoxication of love has never really tasted the sweets of political triumph. What an abundance of strength, of courage, of power I draw from you as from some inexhaustible mine of moral wealth! In the manifold struggles of my career I can spend what I will, with an open hand, never counting the cost, from the hoarded reserve of my brain; through mere contact with you I am sure to replenish the store. In the words of the Galilean,

thou art the fountain of my life, my fair Samaritan!" If Paradise can be defined as enjoyment without satiety, this woman opened its gates to him.

February 23, 1875.—"Your advice is the surest and wisest guide for my own thoughts, and in the love which I have vowed you an ever-growing share of reason and judgment plays its part."

February 22, 1879.—"I know not how to thank you for all the dignity and beauty that you confer every day upon our mating. It is in this way that I have always passionately longed to love and to be loved. To meet such a woman, to devote my life to her, to unlock for her the most hidden recesses of my soul, to be admitted in my turn into the innermost shrine of her heart, to fill every corner of that heart as a lord always ready to obey: my dream has come true, and she whom I have won has become the lodestar of my life, the secret arbiter of my fortunes."

Other letters are extant; let us hope that, if they are published, the work will be done with discrimination. In matters of this sort, a great deal of tact is needed. It is an act of treachery to a public man to reveal him in a moment of disgust, bitterness or rage; posterity will always see him under that aspect and will judge him by that moment, though he himself had soon forgiven and forgotten.

Gambetta wished to give his name to one whom he already looked upon as his wife. With her usual high-mindedness she refused, fearing to blight his great political future and unable to face a marriage unblessed by the Church.

CHAPTER XVI

GAMBETTA AND BISMARCK
THE PRESIDENCY OF THE CHAMBER

Plans for an Interview between Gambetta and Bismarck—The Congress of Berlin—Resignation of Marshal MacMahon and Presidency of Jules Grévy (January 30 1879)—Gambetta President of the Chamber (January 31).

IN 1871, in the course of the peace negotiations, Bismarck had introduced to Thiers a financier of his acquaintance, Graf Henckel von Donnersmarck, who had been Governor of Metz during the war. Graf von Donnersmarck had married the Marquise de Paiva, who owned the *château* of Pontchartrain. In their town house in the Champs-Elysées they used to give famous dinners, at which well-known artists and literary men were frequent guests. Gambetta was among those invited. "One can reconnoitre only in the enemy's country," he was fond of saying. On October 17, 1877, Von Donnersmarck wrote to Bismarck informing him of his relations with Gambetta and offering to place at his disposal whatever he might glean from the French statesman. "I am on such an intimate footing with Gambetta that he comes to see me at my place in the country. He has all the Southerner's gift of the gab, so that one has more scope for listening than for talking oneself. Apart from this, Gambetta is the only Frenchman who has trustworthy and accurate information about what is going on in Germany. He has acquired this knowledge through repeated visits to our country in the course of the last few years, during which visits nothing of importance has escaped his notice. If a man who knows how to keep in the background and is devoted heart and soul to your service can be of any use to your Excellency in this matter, let me assure you that I am entirely at your disposal."

Bismarck at first turned a deaf ear to this suggestion. On October 30 Graf Herbert von Bismarck, speaking on behalf of his father, wrote in answer to Von Donnersmarck: "We must show some consideration for the good name of a French statesman, and be careful not to compromise him through any flagrant dealings with the Chancellor." At the end of December, Henckel replied: "I undertake to send Gambetta to you at Varzin, either publicly or in secret, whichever you prefer." Bismarck, however, still could not see his way to accept the proposal. He again declared that Gambetta ought not to endanger his reputation: "The interests that he stands for must be scrupulously guarded."

Gambetta left for Rome, saw the King, the Prime Minister Depretis, and Crispi, the Home Secretary. Still relying on his lucky star, he seemed quite ready to proceed, by way of Vienna, to Berlin.

The war between Russia and Turkey was drawing to a close. The Russians were at the gates of Constantinople, and the Turks were asking for an armistice. On February 19 Bismarck spoke in the Reichstag and announced that a Congress would be held. Gambetta wrote to his confidante: "I have read the 'Monster's' speech. I am delighted beyond words; it is just what I wanted, just what I was waiting for, without daring to count upon it as a certainty. Under the cloak of an indirect allusion, he shows that we are a force to be reckoned with. He outlines in masterly fashion the balance and distribution of power on the continent. It is indeed more than we could have hoped for from the capricious and turbulent spirit of the adventurer of genius who has welded the new Germany by fire and steel. The radiant dawn of Right is beginning to peep forth in his soul. It is for us to take time by the forelock, to profit by conflicting ambitions, so that we may squarely assert our legitimate claims and, in concert with him, lay the foundations of the new order. Thus I have reached the pinnacle of my desires: peace assured for many years to come, the exhibition no longer in danger of being abandoned, the Powers in a fair way to draw closer to France if they wish to act, and even if they merely wish to

deliberate and keep things as they are. To-day will be a red-letter day."

In this first impression there was no little self-delusion, as the "wise Minerva" grasped at once; in reading Bismarck's speech, she had not been moved to the same enthusiasm. Spuller said of his friend, later: "He was too good-natured. He did not judge mankind by critical standards." But at this moment Gambetta felt that the period of intolerable strain for France, a period that had lasted seven years, was over, and that she was once more taking her place as a Great Power in the councils of Europe.

Was it incumbent on France to go to Berlin, if invited to do so? At the moment when Bismarck was minded to recast his religious policy; when Russia, though victorious, was worn out by the struggle; when a new reign was beginning in Italy; when a new Pope was ascending the pontifical throne; when the Universal Exhibition was on the point of opening, should France remain absent, mute, isolated, or was it in her interest to take her place once more at the European council-board? Gambetta at first was for holding aloof (*La République française, cf.* his speech of February 21, 1878, in the Chamber), suggesting that France, in a conference whose trend was one of opposition to Russia, would hazard an estrangement from the very Power that she ought henceforth to look upon as a prospective ally. After an interview with Waddington and Freycinet, however, he changed his opinion, and asked: Could we, who have been among the signatories to the Treaties of 1856 and 1871, allow them to be revised without our co-operation?

Ought he, before the Congress, to see the man who was to preside over it, "squarely assert our legitimate claims," get to the bottom of his real intentions?—"We must either fight or make terms," he used to say, and he knew that as yet France could not fight. The Universal Exhibition was about to open, and France was to display there her renascent vigour. He had just returned from another visit to Germany, he had inspected her army, he had gauged its strength, he knew it to be far superior to ours both in numbers and organ-

isation. We had no allies. The only thing for us to do, he held, was to maintain courteous relations with Germany for the time being and to profit by them, if we could. For more than two years past he had secretly harboured the idea that some agreement might be reached, some scheme of barter devised. The letters he addressed to Ranc from the end of 1875, now published for the first time, betray scruples of conscience which are all to his credit and disprove certain imputations that have been cast upon his character.

September 20, 1875.—"If by an act of diplomacy we could avert from our own heads the conflict that is in the making, or at least postpone it, or, best of all, stave off altogether the orgy of bloodshed that we see as in a vision, you and I, ought we not to put forth our best endeavours. How, you ask? By means of the colonies! With you I can be perfectly candid: which ought we to think more of—our outlying dependencies or our future generations? Let us boldly face this painful alternative: either the lives of young Frenchmen, or slices of our dominions overseas. Should we not take advantage of that roving spirit, of the German fondness for colonies? They have no colonies, and they want some. We have what they want, and have so far craved for in vain. Surely this is a chance not to be missed, if only we know how to grasp it. X—— can tell you a good deal about our diplomacy that never rises to the occasion, our home policy that wrecks our position abroad! How can we save ourselves from the coming deluge? From *you* I will not hide my uneasiness, my wavering moods, my perplexities and my gloomy forebodings. Whom else can I confide in? Who else is there among my friends and yours, who would not stab me in the back? Would they understand the mental agony I am going through? They seem to have forgotten 1870!"

December 1, 1875.—"An unlooked-for opportunity is mine, if I care to take it. The Chancellor is coming to Paris; he is trying to make the visit impressive, and says he wants to have a talk with one or two French notabilities. Ought I to wash my hands of the business? Should I be doing my duty as a Frenchman? But there, you know that he has visions of a

colonial future for his country, that his country is strong, perhaps invincible. Should we not save our rising generation from having to offer a noble, but useless sacrifice? If they disappear, France will be crippled for ever."

On April 4, 1878, Von Donnersmarck once more suggested the interview to Bismarck. This time the Chancellor consented, and the meeting was fixed for the 30th, in Berlin, where he had to go for the session of the Reichstag. On the 18th, however, Von Donnersmarck received the following note from Gambetta: "Man proposes, Parliament disposes. When I hastened to accept your invitation yesterday, I had reckoned without my host. The questions that concern the War Office have suddenly become extremely urgent. I cannot desert my Parliamentary post. Consequently I am compelled to postpone the scheme for the present." A mere pretext: he was backing out, at heart only too glad to break his appointment. It was a snub from the vanquished to the victor, to the man at whose nod all Europe trembled.

This projected meeting, when the news leaked out later on, gave rise to much angry comment and to controversies which have not yet died down. It became a bone of party contention. All its features were magnified and distorted, according to the dictates of interest or passion. The Royalists, at the time when they thought it was a service to their cause to assail the memory of Gambetta, made the most of Von Donnersmarck's correspondence with Herbert von Bismarck. One of them, the shrewd and discerning M. Jacques Bainville, who has since written a remarkable book, *Histoire de deux Peuples* [France and Germany], translated this correspondence under the title *Correspondance Secrète de Gambetta et de Bismarck.* Another issued a pamphlet entitled *La République de Bismarck.* M. Henri Galli has replied to these Monarchists: "You denounced Gambetta in his lifetime as a prophet of war and revenge, and now, after his death, you denounce him for making overtures to Bismarck!"

To assert that Gambetta, in going to see Bismarck, was writing off Alsace and Lorraine as a loss, is sheer nonsense.

On the contrary, it was for the sake of Alsace and Lorraine that he planned the journey.

No more proof is needed than the letter we have quoted above: "It is for us now squarely to assert our legitimate claims and lay the foundations of the new order." Where he was wrong was in adding: "in concert with him" (Bismarck), and when, crediting the great forger with his own sentiments, he exclaimed: "You see how the radiant dawn of Right is beginning to peep forth in this man's soul."

One might have thought that on the eve of the Congress of Berlin Gambetta intended to discuss the Mediterranean with the Chancellor. As the event proved, this topic might well have given food for interesting conversations and profitable arrangements. No, his mind was wholly concentrated on the Treaty of Frankfort. It was certainly a strange delusion on his part to imagine that the conqueror would have been inclined to discuss this subject. Either Bismarck would have cut him short—as William II. always did when French politicians tried to raise the question—or he would have reminded him of Jena and of Germany's need for guarding against an attack. A little later, in an interview with Baron von Holstein, reported by Blowitz, Bismarck, in alluding to the possibility of a meeting with Gambetta, is said to have laid down the condition that there must be no talk about the provinces; if the discussion should become public property, he would thus be able to give his word of honour that the question of the annexed provinces had never been mooted.

In order to understand why Gambetta was so hopeful, we must remember the amazing triumphs of the man who had marched from success to success, who knew his own powers of fascination; we must try to picture ourselves in that world in which Hohenlohe, Von Donnersmarck and Bismarck's agents were ceaselessly burrowing; we must not forget that Thiers had openly declared himself in favour of a reconciliation with Germany; that Emile de Girardin, an intimate friend of the Donnersmarcks, deliberately led by them and by Hohenlohe on to a false track, was continually striving towards the same end in a sensational Press campaign.

Finally, as M. de Freycinet has pointed out in his *Souvenirs*, Gambetta was at this time coming under the spell of another influence. A friend of Gambetta's at San Remo was neighbour to the Crown Prince Frederick, already stricken by the disease that was to carry him off. This prince, married to the English princess whom Bismarck hated, had always given evidence of a pacific temper. He unbosomed himself to Freycinet as regards his conciliatory attitude towards France and his desire to find some day a *modus vivendi* that would be acceptable and honourable for both nations. Gambetta hoped that the reign of this prince would bring about a change of policy. "Who knows?" he said to Freycinet, "the all-pervading justice of Providence has great surprises in store for us!" Here, too, he was mistaken; even if Frederick III.'s reign had lasted longer, he would never have agreed to give up a portion of Alsace-Lorraine.

Why did Bismarck, after repudiating Von Donnersmarck's first suggestions at the end of 1877, change his mind a few months afterwards? Was he not sorely tempted to embroil France with Russia over the 1856 Treaty, with England over Egypt, with Italy over Egypt? What attractive topics for a discussion! The interview might have opened up alluring vistas for French statesmanship. Public opinion, however, would not have understood, and above all the Alsace-Lorrainers might have misconstrued the affair. Evil tongues would have described as a renunciation what in Gambetta's mind was the very opposite. This is precisely what happened later to Jules Ferry when, to prevent Tunis and Bizerta from falling into the hands of Italy (who was leaning towards the Triple Alliance), he had first to explore the state of feeling on the point in Berlin. It was for the same reason that certain French politicians declined to return the artful leads of William II.; they could not endure the thought that they might cause pain or misgivings to a single Alsace-Lorrainer. Once more the astute Spuller intervened to guide his friend into the paths of prudence. The idea of a parley was dropped, never to be resumed. Bismarck, whose pride was wounded, always denied these plans for a meeting—here he

has been given the lie direct by his secretary, Busch—and treated Gambetta to the end as an enemy.

Gambetta's opponents, and certain sensitive and perfervid patriots, taxed him with having altered the whole course of his policy, with having abandoned the idea of revenge, with having intended to work for an understanding with Germany. If he had wished to bring France nearer to Germany, would he have made the *entente* with England the central feature of his programme? He is also taken to task for having concerted with Bismarck to substitute St. Vallier for Gontaut-Biron as our Ambassador in Germany. The truth of the matter is that after the elections of 1877 Gontaut, who had always been scheming for a restoration of the Monarchy, had become impossible. He was as impossible in Berlin as Von Arnim in Paris, and for the same reasons.

In our own day, the spirit of Gambetta's former enemies has reappeared to frame, with more justice, a general indictment. I can imagine one of those great Monarchists, high-souled and upright, who are the ornaments of their party, loyally searching his own conscience and asking: Was Gambetta to blame, were the Republicans to blame if, in 1871, after the manifesto of July 4 on the white flag, the Royalist majority created the title and functions of the President of the Republic and decreed that the Republican system should last as long as their majority held together; if in 1873, after the reading of the letter of October 27 on the white flag, it decided that Marshal MacMahon should retain for seven more years the magisterial office with which he had been temporarily invested? Were the Republicans to blame if the Monarchist Assembly was without a monarch; if the pretenders successively compassed each other's downfall; if the Comte de Chambord, in rejecting the tricolor, buried the Legitimist kingship with his own hands; if a section of the Right frustrated the Duc d'Aumale's candidature for the Presidency; if the Comte de Paris, from fear of the Empire, encouraged his followers, first to found, then to maintain the Republic? Were the Republicans to blame if the Conservative party, in turning out a Cabinet which had a majority in both Cham-

bers, tampered with the Constitution and the parliamentary system at the very outset, clogged up and destroyed the safety-valve and discredited the appeal to the country, the supreme safeguard of national sovereignty? And could he not add to-day: Were the Republicans to blame if the Conservatives did their share towards upsetting more than fifty Ministries in forty-four years? Could he not, finally, re-read the pages of M. Denys Cochin (*Louis Philippe,* 1918, pp. 77, 78) on the *émigrés,* who "by contagion with the world" did "incalculable harm to the king," and those of M. Jacques Bainville (*Histoire de trois générations,* pp. 36, 37) on the "ultras" of the Restoration ("no one thought he had made his mark unless he demolished something"), their "levity" and their "mania for destruction," those "ultras" who "gleefully mingled their ballot-papers with those of the Left, in order to overthrow the Ministers whom their king had chosen"? The fundamental trait in all these malcontents was a "delight in making havoc," and "instinct for anarchy." Ah, if only the French Conservatives had displayed as much wisdom in politics as they have displayed courage on the battlefield!

We have seen how Gambetta entrusted Ranc with his most important secrets. Arthur Ranc was always one of his best friends, one on whom he could unfailingly rely. He had no Genoese suppleness, and he was not the man who would have made the speech on the Athenian Republic. He was shy at bottom, taciturn, a stubborn fighter in debate, but a thorough gentleman, honourable and trustworthy. He seemed to us a sort of Alceste[1] in politics. He professed a keen appreciation of Blanqui. He was a first-rate journalist. Ranc did outpost duty for Gambetta in the lines of the Extreme Left, just as Spuller did in the lines of the Moderates and Liberals. He was the Jacobin Gambettist, just as Spuller was the Girondin and Feuillant Gambettist. His hatred of the Empire had proved a bond between him and the young barrister De Delescluze. Like him, he thought that the mingling of

[1] The leading figure in Molière's *Misanthrope,* distinguished for his bluntness of speech and cynical views of his fellow-men.—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

politics with religion did no good either to religion or to politics. He was too astute not to see that certain men who clamour for free thought are impelled, in their heart of hearts, by instincts of the confessional; but his own attachment to these principles was free from any such alloy. He was a robust gladiator, full-blooded, a trifle rough; but he had a political brain; that is why he loved Gambetta and Gambetta loved him, though all the while fearing him and striving to keep him in check.

The Chamber resumed its sittings from April 29 to June 11. Gambetta, re-elected chairman of the Budget committee, was everywhere at once. He secured the voting of a credit which enabled the territorial force to be summoned for the first time to the colours.

Great public works, canals, harbours, railways, undertaken at the instance of M. de Freycinet, who had become Senator of the Seine department in 1876, afterwards Minister of Works; an inquiry into the economic condition of France; schools built: the Republican party and the community as a whole had every reason to be satisfied. On May 1 the Exhibition was opened. It seemed as if the dark days were over, as if France were once more raising her head.

On May 24, at the Cirque Américain, Gambetta exclaimed: "The more I review the actions and the progress of the French nation, the more do I feel that nothing can resist or impede the onward sweep of this movement, a movement which by drawing all Frenchmen close together, leaves no further loophole for division, for anarchy, for violence, for corruption, for internal feuds; the more do I feel that we are on the verge of that blessèd, thrice-blessèd moment when there will be only one creed, one party, one flag, one France!" In this cry from the heart, the very pith and marrow of the man is revealed. And the famous saying, so often quoted, which to-day appears to us a truism, but which then was a symbol of the revived national unity: "As for me, I am broad-minded enough to be at once a worshipper at the shrine of Joan the Maid and an admirer and disciple of Voltaire!"

June 3 saw the first meeting of the Congress of Berlin. Bismarck barred the way to Russia, installed Austria-Hungary in Bosnia-Herzegovina and laid the train for Teutonic penetration into the Balkans. England gained the Sultan's reluctant assent to her occupation of Cyprus: it was the price of Austria-Hungary's occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and for Lord Beaconsfield it meant fulfilment of the dream he had toyed with as early as 1847 in *Tancred*. For France it was a slap in the face. Our chief mouthpiece, Waddington, was indignant, and told Lord Beaconsfield that France had no other course open to her than to leave the Congress. Lord Salisbury, who expected something of the sort, at once turned the talk upon Egypt and Syria, and said abruptly to Waddington, "You can't leave Carthage in the hands of the barbarians." As regards Egypt, Waddington wanted no more than a statement confirming the equal rights and equal influence of the two Powers, but, alas! we know the value of these dual controls, a hotbed of eternal disputes, in which one of the two parties is inevitably a dupe. On Tunisia Lord Salisbury added: "There you can do whatever you think fit. It is no concern of ours." This line he took up by arrangement with Bismarck.

Our plenipotentiaries, Waddington, St. Vallier and Desprez, fully alive to the advantage of having England's proposals ratified by the Congress, made out a draft for a resolution and sent it to Paris for the Government's approval. The Cabinet, however, fearing a trap, refused to commit itself. After the Congress, however, Waddington secured Salisbury's backing for his suggestions as to Egypt and Tunisia. "His Majesty's Government," said the British Minister, "has expressed its keen appreciation of the success that has attended France's experiments in Algeria, and of the great civilising work that she has undertaken in that country. The presence of France on the North African coast must result in enabling her, whenever she thinks fit, to exert an effective pressure upon the Tunisian Government. The contingency is one that the British Government has long regarded as inevitable."

This exchange of letters throws a vivid light on what is to follow. But if the Chancelleries knew it, France was completely in the dark. She was not privy, either to England's overtures to our representatives, or to the correspondence between the two Cabinets. She only knew the announcement made by Waddington in the Senate during the Budget debate of 1879, when he congratulated France on "having remained free from commitments." In truth, it was no policy of empty hands. Yet who to-day would blame our representatives? They would deserve censure if they had acted otherwise. And, in our opinion, the refusal of the Government to concur in their suggestions can only be deplored. Italy's resentment would have been less acute, and we should not have furnished her with a pretext—or a motive—for allying herself with the Central Powers.

After the Congress, Gambetta granted to the *Times* an interview in which, commending the idea of closer relations between England and France, he added: "An alliance with Russia *resting upon absolutism* is unthinkable." It was considered safe to infer from this pronouncement that Gambetta set his face against the scheme of a Franco-Russian alliance; but the unpublished letters cited above show that he did nothing of the sort. The fact of the matter is that he was addressing the English public, just after the Anglo-Russian dispute and at the moment when the Mediterranean question was coming to the fore. He took care, by the way, to win Russia's good graces by saying: "I think that Russia did a great service to the ideal of public law when, despite the lack of cohesion then prevailing in Europe, she agreed to submit the San Stefano Treaty in its entirety to the approval of the Powers." He went on to observe, regarding the Triple Alliance of 1873: "France has the right to ask herself whether the Congress of Berlin has left the Triple Alliance of 1873 standing where it did. It would be difficult, I think, to answer this in the affirmative. The position assumed by Austria in the new Slav States, of which Bosnia-Herzegovina is justly regarded as the centre, makes that Power anything but an ally of Russia. . . . The Congress of Berlin has com-

pletely altered the basis on which the *entente* of 1873 rested, and France has every reason to be gratified at the change in a combination designed to leave her friendless, if not to attack her point-blank."

Bismarck, after successively defeating Denmark, Austria and Russia, had worsted victorious Russia without coming to blows; he had linked Austria-Hungary to Germany and widened the sphere of Teutonic influence in the Balkans. The Congress of Berlin bore within it the seed of future Balkan wars and of the world-war; but it gave a free hand to England and France in the Mediterranean.

About this time Collectivist Socialism began to make its appearance in France. At the end of 1877 M. Jules Guesde had issued the first number of *L'Egalité*. In a Labour Congress held at Lyons from January 28 to February 8, 1878, the disciples of Collectivism had tried to force their views upon the rest, but the effort had failed. The Exhibition was seized upon as an opportunity for attempting to convene an International Labour Congress. Jules Guesde was at the head of the movement. The organisers were arrested (September 4), prosecuted and found guilty. Jules Guesde appeared in court on October 22 and pleaded for his fellow-defendants. He demanded the establishment of an "equalitarian" society in place of the "feudal" society of to-day.

At the Exhibition, on November 8, Gambetta said to the working-men's deputation from the Aveyron: "Those who imagine that it is the duty, or that it lies within the power, of the Government to secure the happiness of all, are pursuing a mirage. Strictly speaking, there is only one thing that a Government owes to all, and that is, justice. Every man being his own master, it rests with him to make himself happy or unhappy by using his freedom to good or bad purpose. The State does no more than guarantee an equality of rights to everyone, be he rich or poor, high or low. What we want is not an aristocratic or a middle-class or a proletarian Republic, but a national Republic." A rather limited social programme—the programme of a generation that had played

its part under the Commune! The problems still remained and cried out for a solution. Collectivism, with its slogan "the rich always getting richer, the poor always getting poorer"—a theory which even the followers of Marx, such as Bernstein, admitted later on to be a fallacy—the class-struggle, destined to culminate one day in Bolshevism, should have been combated with a programme of bold and far-reaching reforms; but other questions were cropping up at the moment. Three years later, when Gambetta came into power, his Ministers were to introduce measures dealing with trades-unions, old age pensions and accident insurance.

In September, Gambetta went on a tour in the Dauphiné, where his voice had not lost its power to thrill. At Valence, his reception was enthusiastic. Old Madier de Montjau was at once delighted and alarmed: delighted because his young friend's triumphs were all to the good of the Republic; alarmed because in a democracy such idolatry has its dangerous side, especially for the idol himself. He smiled, yet could not repress a frown. He administered to the conquering hero a discreet warning; he drank "to the health of the Republic!" Gambetta wittily played up to the veteran warrior: "We must be on our guard against the spell of personality; nothing can do greater harm than to make any man the object of blind adoration. . . ." He urged the need of unity among the Republicans: "If there are differences between us, they are differences of form and degree, not of kind. And in these disputes we can always appeal to an arbiter who will give us his casting vote—I mean, public opinion. It is only a trained army that can win victories."

At Romans, on the 18th, flowers were strewn in his path; his audience of six thousand were in a jovial mood. Yet he seemed far from well. His intimate letters tell us something of this growing sense of fatigue. He dealt with the possibility that Marshal MacMahon, after Senatorial elections in favour of the Republicans, might feel in duty bound to resign. There was nothing to fear, he held, as regards an interregnum; if the situation seemed likely to become acute, less than an hour

would elapse between the abdication of the old chief and the accession of the new. He hoped, however, that this crisis would not arise, for it was in the public interest that the Constitution should be respected, and the President should exercise his mandate up to the last moment.

With the career of the monarchy for the past hundred years —throughout which, except for the case of Charles X., the sceptre had never been handed on in regular fashion to a successor—he contrasted the Republican organism, the stability ensured by the unbroken rule of law. "And when you can say that a President who owes his position to your opponents and is certainly, in his heart of hearts, no passionate admirer of our new system—when you can say that such a President has fulfilled his mission, and that at the expiry of his term of office the nation has found itself passing quite smoothly from one Presidency to another, then you will have vindicated our movement, not only for France but for the world, in the only possible way: you will have taken a step forward."

Knowing all the while how many weak joints there are in the Ministry's armour, he remains "a staunch Ministerialist." He sings the praises of the army, which must remain the Republicans' first care. He reminds his hearers of the recent review at Vincennes, where our reservists appeared for the first time: "On that day I saw many an eye grow wet with tears, I heard many remarks that were passed, and I realised that no interest was more vital to the nation than that of the army; for it is the faithful representative of France, it should no longer do service but for her honour and her independence."

On religion, he strikes the familiar note: "No, we are not the enemies of religion. On the contrary, we pay willing homage to freedom of conscience, we respect every form of religious or philosophical opinion. I acknowledge no man's right to choose, in the name of the State, between one creed and another, between two theories on the origin of the world or upon an after-life. For the ministers of every Church I have the profoundest esteem. They have duties to perform towards their fellow-men, but they also have duties towards

the State, and what I require is that they shall carry out those duties. . . ." His remarks are always aimed at the official, not the secular, clergy: "The laws must be enforced, and no one must be specially favoured."

This is perfectly sound. The State cannot determine what its citizens are to believe or not. Philosophical tenets lie outside its sphere. If the State attempted to impose any particular doctrine, it would become a Church, that is to say, a corporation of men professing the same compulsory beliefs. That is why Mirabeau said: "Religion can no more be national than conscience." The State can neither ordain nor condemn any form of faith. The monarchy tried the experiment, and failed, and the same fate befell Napoleon.

The Romans speech wound up with an allusion to the amnesty: "Then a France that has recovered her calm, a France sure of herself, solely engrossed in developing her ample resources, a France that is restored, and relies on a truly national army, will be able to stand before the world free from the toils of her enemies, having, I hope, by mercy and indulgence gathered all her children under her wing, and to say, "I am strong, I am invulnerable, because I uphold liberty and peace."

At Grenoble (October 10) he sets forth the programme for the approaching Senatorial elections: "It is essential to have a Senate which shall be a school of Government, a friend and a mentor to the Chamber of Deputies, 'an Assembly of control, not of conflict. . . .'"

In order to recruit his flagging energies, he looked for a place in the neighbourhood of Paris where from time to time he might be able to enjoy a brief respite, with the woman who had now become his inseparable companion. On the boundary between Sèvres and Ville d'Avray he had found a modest abode, Les Jardies, once occupied by Balzac's secretary. He was beginning to feel the limitless depression that sometimes arises from the sight of crowds; what he wanted now was the trees that do not chatter, the waters that sleep, and more than ever, the woman who could make him forget the world and its troubles. "How I revel in the unaccustomed delights of soli-

tude, in this great soothing silence, in the kindly shelter of the woods, in these unruffled, slumbering pools set in masses of fragrant heather, and above all in the power to commune with myself, to think things out at leisure, beyond the reach of the jostling, jeering multitude. It is not my body but my soul that here gains freedom, peace, the healing balm of rest." (July 28, 1878.) And on November 3, on his return from a speech-making campaign in the Dauphiné: "I asked Testelin to stay to dinner. He sat in your place at table. He rounded off the meal with a toast that went straight to my heart. He drank a glass of Cape wine to the honour of the fair wood-nymph who under the trees of Ville d'Avray has brought me back to health, to my future."

The Chamber reassembled on October 28. There was an acrimonious debate on the subject of disputed elections. The ex-Minister of the Interior, Fourtou, defended himself by attack. Dufaure flung down his famous challenge to the heroes of the Sixteenth of May affair: "You who speak and ask me what I stand for, will you be good enough to tell me what views *you* stand for? Yes, there is a party without a name!" An interruption from Gambetta led to a bloodless duel with pistols between him and Fourtou.

On January 5 came the Senatorial elections. There were 82 seats to be filled. Sixty-six Republicans were returned, this assuring the Left a majority of some 40 to 50 votes. The Republic had the upper hand in both Assemblies.

On January 28 nine army corps commanders, who had exceeded the legal period of their command, were relieved of their duties. To the Marshal, this was the last straw: out of a fellow-feeling for old comrades-in-arms he handed in his resignation. Jules Grévy was at once elected in his stead. Waddington became Prime Minister, while retaining the position of Foreign Secretary; Léon Say remained at the Treasury, Freycinet at the Public Works, while Jules Ferry became Minister for Education (February 4, 1879).

Waddington, a scholar, an expert on coins and archæology, a member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, a devotee of book-lore, Anglo-Saxon in his bearing and his

mentality, seemed to have studied ancient rather than modern history, but as a matter of fact he was well versed in both, and was to prove it before long. He was, however, less at home in the Chamber, less familiar with the intricacies of the Parliamentary chess-board.

Ardent admirers of Gambetta, such as M. Joseph Reinach and M. Gabriel Hanotaux, maintain that Grévy, when he became President in 1879, ought to have offered the Premiership to Gambetta, the real leader of the majority. This view does not find favour with all Gambetta's partisans: some hold that at this juncture, the Senate being at odds with the Chamber, Gambetta would have worn himself out uselessly in the ensuing conflicts. He, himself, by the way, thought that his hour had not yet struck: he offered himself for the Presidency of the Chamber and was elected on January 31, by a majority of 314 out of a total of 405. He took his seat in the Presidential chair on February 6. On this occasion he spoke most flatteringly of Grévy: "I am succeeding to the great citizen, the great statesman whom the French electorate, without a moment's hesitation, have summoned to the Presidency of the Republic. In that office he will enjoy the resolute support of France, the unswerving loyalty of Parliament, and the esteem of the world at large. If he is to-day the head of the nation, he remains our teacher and our model." Then, in words destined to mark a decisive stage in his thought: "We should all feel now that the Governments whose watchword was destruction have had their day. Our Republic, having at last emerged victorious from the party fray, must enter upon an epoch of organising and creating."

Under a parliamentary *régime,* the President of the Chamber must be independent of parties and of the Government. This independence is the very basis of his authority. He speaks, he acts in the name of the Assembly as a whole. No other conception of the Presidency is compatible with the existence and the rights of a responsible Ministry. In the United States, the representative system, under which the Ministers are not members of the Legislature and are dependent on the President of the Republic, has led to different

results. The legislative power, unless firmly organised, ran the risk of being crippled by the executive, and accordingly the threads of legislative action were concentrated in the hands of the official who presides over Congress, the official known as "the Speaker." But for the name, he has nothing in common with the English Speaker of the House of Commons. Originally he was able to propose Bills, resolutions and amendments. Even to-day, he is not merely the chairman of the deputies, he is to some extent their chief. At times he has even thwarted the President of the United States. This position of the Speaker is closely bound up with the whole representative system of the country; it is an extreme consequence of the careful separation of functions, and is quite in keeping with the spirit of the American Constitution, which is designed to prevent any authority from absorbing the others and to maintain the whole structure in a state of perfect balance. To disturb the equipoise of functions would be to strike a blow at the very vitals of the Republic.

In the nature of things, there can never be any parallel between the Presidency of the United States Congress and the Presidency of the French Assemblies. With a constitutional Chief of State and a responsible Cabinet, a political Presidency of the Chamber (by which I mean that of one who remains a party man) is an absurdity. If ever the party spirit should raise its head in this office, the parliamentary *régime* would be vitiated in its first principles.

A President of the Assembly must keep in touch with all the essential business of the House; but a President who comes down from his chair to cross swords in the party fray, to support or oppose a Government, to dictate a policy or to defend one—all this, from the standpoint of parliamentary life, is sheer anarchy. Such fumbling experiments might, at a pinch, be excusable where a Republic was still in its infancy and had just begun learning to walk, but they are quite unworthy of a mature democracy. The Republic, five years after the enactment of the Constitution, would have had to be vigorous indeed to survive such a distortion of its principles.

In France, throughout all our revolutions and changes of

government, we have had in the Chamber types of Presidents rather than a type of Presidency. We have had more than one President who was a party man, even a fighter, which shows that in the practical working of parliamentary institutions we are centuries behind the English.

Dupin, in the Legislative Assembly, led from his chair a daily campaign against the Mountain,[1] and thus indirectly paved the way for the *coup d'état*. In the same way as Sauzet's weakness had contributed towards the fall of the July Monarchy, Dupin's pugnacious temperament contributed to the fall of the Second Republic.

The early stages of the Third Republic, on the other hand, were favoured by a fortunate event. We have seen how, at Thiers' advice, Jules Grévy was elected President of the National Assembly by the Royalists as well as by the Republicans. Grévy had the essential virtues of a President of the Chamber: clarity of vision, self-possession and fairness. The honour thus paid to him by his political opponents lent his Presidency a unique weight from the very outset. Not that a President elected by members of his own party alone cannot attain to the same degree of fairness; but it is obviously more easy for this functionary to hold his own against antagonists who have already acknowledged his title to respect: better equipped for keeping them in check, he also is under a stronger obligation to humour them and to ensure that their rights shall not be disregarded.

Gambetta presided over the Chamber with tact, kindliness and good humour. But, at the time when he took his seat in the chair, he had become the unquestioned leader of the Republican party; in the eyes of his friends, his real place would have been on the Ministerial benches; he alone could have staved off, if not prevented altogether, the disruption of the Republican forces. As it turned out, he was frequently to come down from the presidential chair to reappear at the rostrum and endeavour, at critical moments, to direct his party.

[1] The name originally given to those members of the 1792 Convention who occupied the topmost benches in the Chamber, and were always in favour of violent measures. -TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

The Republicans, in nominating him, marked him out as the potential head of the Cabinet.

Now the practice of making the Presidency of an Assembly the stepping-stone to the Premiership is one that could be resorted to in the early days of a new system, when the rules were as yet not clearly defined; but in normal times it is an ill-advised practice, putting the Cabinet in a false position, forcing it to meet its liabilities before they fall due, and placing it at the mercy of its successor. The influence that the President of an Assembly can wield over those who depend upon its goodwill is already great enough, and there is no need to entice him by the bait of future leadership to assert it over the Executive. From this point of view, the Presidency of the Senate has always conformed with the true maxims of parliamentary government, whereas at first the Presidency of the Chamber did not observe them as it should have done.

Moreover, the qualities and virtues essential to a President of the Chamber are not those of a Prime Minister. Often they are very opposite. One who has presence of mind in the chair may have none at the rostrum, and *vice versa*. The two positions are entirely different, and each needs special capacities. The fire and vehemence that are a source of strength at the rostrum are a source of weakness in the chair. They marred the Comte de Serre's Presidency under the Restoration, and they proved more serviceable to Gambetta at the rostrum than in the chair.

Jules Grévy had shown himself a model holder of the post first in the National Assembly and then in the Chamber. At the time of his appointment to the Presidency of the Republic he was sixty-one. By one of those paradoxes that occur so frequently in history, and not least in ours, he became the watchdog of a Constitution which he himself had not desired, which he had fought against with might and main, clinging stubbornly to the ideal embodied in his amendment of 1848, which had made his name: a single Assembly, and a Prime Minister charged with the executive power and dismissible at a moment's notice. Later, Grévy had reappeared in the

Corps Législatif. He had refused to join the National Defence Government, for he would recognise no government that had not a legal basis. A fine type of our middle class at its best, he was much addicted to letters, knew Horace and Racine by heart and would quote them at length, as Gambetta used to quote Rabelais and Mirabeau. When my father introduced me to him at the Elysée—I had then just entered Parliament—he was at pains to show off his literary attainments, and after discoursing eloquently on Hugo, Lamartine, De Musset and De Vigny, he recited to us, straight off the reel, the hundred and fifty verses of *Les Etoiles,* from the *Secondes Meditations* [of Lamartine]. In his cult for Lamartine, who had not yet quite retrieved his unmerited disgrace, I seemed to detect a certain resentment at the rather coarse popularity with which Hugo's glory was then alloyed; but one felt, from his manner of delivery, that the veteran jurist, the terse and lucid orator, admired in Lamartine the very reverse of what so many people have seen in him, those touches of faithful and vivid realism, the clear light which the skies of Milly had brought to the eyes and the soul of the young poet, and which he compared to that of Attica. Besides being devoted to letters, Grévy was learned in the law, and also, when he went to Mont-sous-Vaudrey, a capable sportsman and a crafty peasant, with a keen sense of the value of land, of men, and of money. His speeches were cold and laconic, and every word of them told; his reasoning was vigorous and subtle; he was wary, reserved, always courteous and dignified. His geniality was always tinged with prudence, he never let himself go, never painted in flamboyant colours. A striking contrast to Gambetta, the man of the people, with his ardent, generous nature, his impetuous flow of language! The mountaineer from the Jura could feel no real sympathy with the child of the sun-bathed Mediterranean shores. He found him too noisy, too effervescent. Himself like a sealed book, he had no love for one who wore his heart upon his sleeve. His eyes could not stand the glare of that mighty flame, his soul was oppressed by that formidable popularity. He had been informed of the plans for the interview with Bismarck,

and scented danger in the proposal. Then, too, Gambett wanted a solid, compact majority, with a strong executiv at its head, and himself at the head of that executive, for drastic policy at home and abroad. Grévy, on the other hand was no enthusiast for action, he shrank from adventures, h saw everything from the angle of home politics, and after th fevers and shocks of the past decade he preferred a quiet life men and Ministries that would let sleeping dogs lie. He wa a President for a convalescent France. (See his conversatio with Scheurer-Kestner on Alsace-Lorraine in July, 187 *Publications of the Gambetta Society.*) After Gambetta' death, his legal knowledge and his self-possession stoo France in good stead at the time of the Schnaebelé incident.

The tribune's fair helpmate, living quietly amid the shad bowers of Les Jardies, who a short while before had been les favourably impressed than he by Bismarck's speech, wa again none too well pleased at his appointment to the Presi dency of the Chamber. He might think, she suggested, tha it was merely a temporary side-tracking, since Grévy did n wish to summon him to office; but was he certain that he wa not being driven down a blind alley? And was it a positio that suited him? He writes to his wood-nymph, trying t reassure her: "It seems to me that, at a distance, you pass stern, a bitter judgment on what is done and cannot be undone Your vision is distorted by love. I should like to explain t you the reasons for being glad, to prove to you that I hav chosen the better part, the nobler way. . . . From no onward, the terrible campaign that has lasted eight years over so far as I am concerned. I shall be able to proceed t the second programme, to external action, and, keeping abov and outside the party turmoil, to choose my time, my path my methods. . . ." Thus the Presidency of the Chambe was, in his eyes, a post for listening and waiting, a stepping stone: "I shall be able to proceed to external action," " shall be able to choose my time." But he was not time' master!

On July 14, 1879, the first review of the remodelled arm

ook place. He wrote to Les Jardies: "As soon as I set eyes n our young soldiers, I felt my loftiest and most sacred opes stirring in my soul, and those great designs which I an never abandon. I came away from the spot with my mind raced and invigorated. On my return to town, I found once nore my belovèd Parisian populace. They gave me a right oyal welcome, they cheered themselves hoarse, but at heart regard these ovations only as a means of attaining the atriotic goal I have set before me, never as a mere personal ribute. From such triumphs I always come back better, tronger, more confident."

Always he shows optimism, not without a touch of raggadocio, but a fervent patriotism, a passionate devotion o the army. Never does he lose sight of his exalted hopes, is supreme design, fixed and unalterable. How has anyone rought himself to say that his heart had changed, that his deal was no longer the same? He still harbours in his breast hat ambition which he cannot avow, or cannot avow without eiling it under the name of "right."

On November 27, the Chambers were opened. From that ime forward, he received at the Palais Bourbon all the nota- ilities of the country, soldiers and diplomats, writers, nanciers, captains of industry and commerce. All came nder his spell, but they found that this great talker knew how o listen, and welcomed talent in others. He was always eady to learn. Everywhere he had correspondents. One lay he lunched with the Prince of Wales, another day he lined with Renan. At this period, Goncourt [in his *Journal*] otes the following remark made by a politician: The only ables in Paris to which foreign statesmen resorted and where he hosts dominated the whole company to an amazing extent were those of Girardin and Gambetta; Gambetta's lunches, to which every man of mark was invited sooner or later, were the eal cause of his popularity all over Europe; it was in this way hat he came into close touch with members of the Parliaments f England, Italy, Hungary, Greece. . . .

He liked the society of artists, and himself spoke as an artist t the unveiling of Corot's statue. He fascinated the men of

letters, even the most recalcitrant, even those who affect a lordly disdain for politics, as if action were not the highest of the arts! Flaubert, then on intimate terms with George Sand, who in 1870 had displayed a rabid antipathy to the Government of Tours and Bordeaux, wrote to her: "Gambetta (since you ask me my opinion on the gentleman in question) seemed to me at first grotesque, then sensible, then amiable, and finally charming (the word is not too strong). We chatted together without outside interruption, for twenty minutes, and now we know each other as if we had met a hundred times. What I like about him is that he does not indulge in threadbare platitudes, and I think he is human." (The gradation is very characteristic.) Alphonse Daudet, who had penned a very scathing article on the provincial campaign, declared that he would cut it out of his published works, and wrote some very moving and graceful pages after his meeting with Gambetta in the shady retreat of Les Jardies: "Gambetta, I was glad to admit, read everything, saw everything, always showed himself an expert judge and a man of fine literary perceptions. It was a delightful visit. . . ." (*Les Débats d'un homme de lettres.*)

He was lovable, and success made him still more lovable. But it was not everyone about him who found him attractive in an equal degree. There were some who were proof against his charm. He was blamed for being hard on the Government: how could he have been otherwise? His friends chafed; they regarded themselves as being victims led to the altar. They accused Grévy of having infringed the rules of parliamentary procedure, in not conferring power on the real leader of the majority. Cliques were being formed apart from the main body, new men were coming along and passing over the heads of well-tried veterans; there was general unrest and confusion.

On December 27 the Waddington Cabinet, disunited, impotent, seeming only to live in the shadow of the President of the Chamber, tendered its resignation.

CHAPTER XVII

'THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE": "THE DICTATORSHIP"

The Freycinet Ministry—The Amnesty—The Cherbourg Speech (August 9)—"The Hidden Hand"—The Journey to Cahors: "the Dictatorship!"—The Belleville Programme (August 12, 1881)—The Tunisian Affair.

GRÉVY did not send for Gambetta, but for the Minister of Public Works, M. de Freycinet. The latter was given, besides the Premiership, the portfolio of the Foreign Office, and kept Jules Ferry and the bulk of the old Cabinet. This practice of forming Cabinets with elements of former Ministries was contrary to the principle of ministerial solidarity laid down in the Constitution, and was destined to prevent it from working in regular lines for a long time to come. The President of the Republic, in his inaugural message, announced that he would "faithfully obey the great law of the parliamentary system," but his performance did not altogether tally with his promise. Possibly, if his attention had been called to the fact, he would have answered that the parties were not yet well-marked or organised enough to enable this law to be rigorously carried out, and that the survival of the unconstitutional Opposition was a stumbling-block to the application of the rule observed in England.

M. de Freycinet, besides the brilliant qualities that he had displayed at the War Office in 1870, a luminous intelligence, capacity for hard work, ingenuity and coolness, had won his spurs as a dexterous, persuasive speaker, finding a path into the hearts of the most refractory, gliding adroitly past every rock and shoal. He seemed frail, yet had the toughness of steel. His thin voice, like his personality, was all-pervasive, wormed its way into men's minds, broke down every barrier,

and swept away every obstacle. In a style peculiarly his own he was a great debater and a consummate political speaker. "Since Thiers," says one who has portrayed French society of that day, "no such captivating oratory has been heard in the House. It is an intellectual treat to listen to M. de Freycinet when he has an unpopular cause to plead. His voice, melodious as a flute, carries to the furthest corner of a vast building. His periods, full but not redundant, each contain an argument, and never say too much or too little. Politics, for this great man of science, consist in solving a series of equations, in co-ordinating an infinite number of curves, for which circumstances supply the elements. He takes them as they come, and his calculations lend themselves to every combination. But sometimes there are jolts that upset the mathematician's table." (*La Société de Paris*, 1888, by the Comte Paul Vasili.)

M. de Freycinet had recently identified himself with the programme of public works which were giving a fresh impetus to the economic life of the country. His personal opinion was that the President of the Republic had no longer any valid reason for not offering Gambetta the Premiership; he looked upon himself as a means to this end and as merely holding the reins until his old chief of the National Defence should take them over. Grévy's real idea was: "A majority with a Parliamentary leader, that would be all very well if only it were not for Gambetta!" The man was too powerful. He weighed on the Government like an incubus. He threw the Ministers and the President of the Republic into the shade. Democracies are always suspicious. Ours was particularly so, just after the disasters caused by absolute rule. Many Republicans dreaded its revival, even under Parliamentary forms. Gambetta took up too much room, he trespassed, he overflowed. If France was committed to an unassuming policy, why all this commotion? Grévy, himself a quiet man liked to have quiet men about him. To put it in a nutshell he lacked confidence. As a rule, under a parliamentary system, when a party carries its chief to power it stands by that chief and remains united. It is easy to see why events

took a different turn in our case from the very first days of the Third Republic.

Gambetta was re-elected President of the Chamber, but only by 257 votes out of a total of 308; 40 ballot-papers were blank. At the previous ballot he had obtained 314 votes. Here was already a warning, but he had to let things take their course. He was blamed for hanging back, but nothing had been offered him. As a matter of fact, however much his friends wanted it, he himself had no wish to be summoned to office.

The Government was for a postponement of the general amnesty. In June, however, one Trinquet, who had been deported under the Commune, was elected borough councillor in the Père-Lachaise ward, as against the candidate supported by Gambetta. The latter, fearing to lose Paris at the approaching elections and wishing to break with the advanced wing of the Left, convoked the members of the Left Centre in the Senate and the Chamber to a meeting in M. de Freycinet's room at the Foreign Office. He pleaded for a general amnesty, a measure which he, who could bear no malice, had always desired. The proposal was a timely one, inasmuch as the arrangements for the Fourteenth of July festivities and the distribution of new colours to the army were at hand. He won the Government over to his way of thinking: a Bill was drafted and came up for debate on June 21. Freycinet explained why the Government had changed its mind: "We considered that amnesties are peculiarly suited to special occasions." (Cries of "Oh! oh!" from all parts of the House.) Gambetta realised that he was called upon to speak. Never was his declamatory skill more in evidence, his ascendancy over the Chamber more pronounced. "In asking the House kindly to give me a hearing, I have yielded to an overpowering sense of duty. It is as President of the Chamber, as the mouthpiece of the majority—on that score and on no other—that I have been consulted. I am not above the Government. I know my rank and my place. I remain at the post which you have entrusted to my charge; but I should be failing to grasp its full responsibilities if, when the moment has come

for passing a verdict on the timeliness of a Government measure, I could bring myself to hold selfishly aloof, and to look on at what the rest were doing, without contributing my share to the work." Yet he was the very man who had brought pressure to bear on the Ministry and on the Senators in order to win them over to his views!

He admits that France "shows no warmth or enthusiasm" on the point in question, but "she has another feeling, one of weariness. She is tired of hearing an endless series of debates upon the amnesty, and she says to her administrators and members of Parliament: "When will you sweep away this miserable relic of the Civil War?"

Finally, the moving, impassioned appeal to the coalescence of all the popular forces, in one great impulse to forgive and forget: "I, who am the oldest soldier of extreme democracy, and its loyal spokesman, have nothing to learn about its weaknesses or its reckless outbursts of feeling. But there is one thing that I insist upon, and that is the unfettered right to form my own judgment. They know, those men of the advanced wing, that I have never toadied to them, never misled them. Yesterday, they made a mistake" (referring to the Trinquet election) . . . "Did you imagine that you could prevent this propaganda from succeeding? Don't you realise that you can nip such ill-advised movements in the bud? . . . It has been said, and with justice, that the Fourteenth of July is a national festival, a meeting-place where the army, which the country properly regards as its pride, will for the first time find itself face to face with the powers that be, where it will recover those colours, alas! so shamefully thrown away. . . ." I was present in the House, and can still see the great orator, with his head bowed, as if overwhelmed by the defeat and the treachery, his voice failing him: "Yes, on that day, in the face of the country, in the face of authority, in the face of the nation as represented by its faithful stewards, in face of that army, 'ever first in our hearts,' as was said by a poet who, in other precincts, before the whole world, had pleaded the cause of the vanquished—on that day you must close the book of the past decade, and rear a tombstone of oblivion over the crimes

and the last remaining traces of the Commune, and you must say to all, to those whose absence we shall all deplore, to those whose feuds and disagreements we sometimes regret, that there is but one France and one Republic!" Amid rousing cheers, the Bill was passed by 312 votes to 116.

In the Senate, Jules Simon replied: "I prefer a Cabinet which applies its own theories to a Cabinet which applies the theories of others, and adopts the methods of its adversaries for fear that they may supplant it!" Thanks to an amendment excluding from the amendment those guilty of crimes of arson and murder, the Bill was carried in the Senate.

After this new and resplendent victory, Gambetta appeared more than ever as the chief, by the side of and above the official Government. The country pinned its faith on him, and he waited for it to act. But in Parliament, such a state of affairs could not but lead to collisions, to conflicts, by creating a general impression that the Cabinets were only provisional, and lived always on the brink of a precipice. The Presidency of the Republic was no less trammelled than the Presidency of the Chamber. In the lobbies and the Press, the phrase "power behind the throne" was freely bandied about, and malicious tongues whispered "dictatorship!"

On July 14 the ceremony of distributing the new colours to the army took place. Gambetta was greeted with uproarious applause. In the evening he gave a splendid reception at the Palais Bourbon. He loved the army, and the army loved him in return. The rooms were crammed to overflowing with generals and other officers. He spoke to them again of his anxiety to promote the strength, the glory, the well-being of the army. He knew well enough that France could not regain her old position save through alliances, and that she would only find allies in proportion as she waxed stronger: "I have never lost hope of the future: you should look forward to it with confidence, as I do. Can we be forbidden to hope, when we have men at hand who will know how to defend our soil against every onslaught? I will only add this, 'Let us never forget!'" Old Marshal Canrobert, with tears in his eyes, embraced him. At the

dinner given on July 17 to the generals from all the garrisons of France, the menu bore the dates, 1880–18—, a significant blank, to remind them of their duty.

But as his popularity advanced, so the danger was heightened. The army had been granted its colours on July 14: it was decided that the navy should receive its colours on August 10. The President of the Republic and those of the Senate and Chamber proceeded to Cherbourg. Gambetta proposed the health of the President of the Republic, "whose name is graven on the heart of every Frenchman, whose signal services are appreciated as they deserve."

After the official banquet, while the President of the Republic was paying a visit to the headquarters of the naval division, Gambetta went off to a reception given in his honour at the "Traders' and Manufacturers' Club." Owing to a misunderstanding, only a few people were present. But the speech was ready: "I have never forgotten who I am, whence I come and whither I am going. I know that I am sprung from the most humble ranks of the democracy of workers, and that I am bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh. In those fatal days that you all remember, I never aspired to the dictatorship, and I do not aspire to it now. I wish to be nothing more than a servant of the democracy, to serve it in my proper station, in my due place. When I came to Cherbourg ten years ago—I may as well mention it, since we have spoken of that tragic period—I came to fulfil a sacred duty. Fortune turned her back on us. In all those ten years, we have not let slip one word of rashness or vainglory. . . ." Then came those famous words: "*We may have a full restitution if it be based upon right;* we or our children can look forward to it, for no power on earth can say to any man, 'Thou shalt not hope!' It has sometimes been alleged that our adoration for the army, that army in which to-day all the national forces are centred, amounts to a cult. Yet it is no sabre-rattling spirit that inspires and enforces that cult: it is grim necessity. We, who have seen France fall so low, must raise her to her feet and restore her to her rightful place in the world. If our hearts beat, it is to reach this goal, and not to

pursue an ideal of blood and slaughter; it is to ensure that not one jot of the France that remains shall be lost; it is to feel that we can count upon the future, to know whether, here below, there is an *immanent justice* in things that will come on its appointed day and at its appointed hour!"

No bellicose speech this: "We are not striving after an ideal of blood and slaughter." "We may have a full restitution if it be based upon right." How far he was sincere has been revealed in his private correspondence. Nevertheless, his opponents began to exclaim: "Gambetta spells war!"—drawing down upon themselves the just reproach that they themselves had so often appealed to him to bring the foreigner into our quarrels. And long after his death, with palpable inconsistency, they accused him of having by this speech renounced the idea of action and, through holding out hopes of a peaceful retribution, weakened the moral fibre of France. M. Charles Maurras, whose attitude towards Gambetta has always been severely critical, could still write in 1916 that his patriotism was "purely moral and legal," "cared little for territory, and recked nothing of history." (*Quand les Français ne s'aimaient pas.*) Gambetta's patriotism was indeed moral and legal, but it is not true to say that it cared little for territory and recked nothing of history; and it certainly throbbed with passion. Only, Gambetta was compelled to gain time, and this explains his conduct and his language after 1875.

A week later, Grévy, in passing through Dijon station on his way to Mont-sous-Vaudrey, read a lesson to "men of personal ambitions": "To-day," he said, "it is no individual, whatever be his station, who should be praised, it is France as a whole, France that is so sensible, so wise, so keen a judge of her own interests. Let us go on being wise, let us not be driven into the sins of impatience, of exaggeration or of violence."

Not a month elapsed before M. de Freycinet handed in his resignation. His Cabinet, lacking unity, melted away like the Waddington Cabinet.

Seeing that the Waddington and Freycinet Cabinets had

lasted less than a year, was Grévy going to send for Gambetta? The controversies to which the Cherbourg speech had given rise were not calculated to incline him towards this step. Attempts to persuade him were met with a blank refusal. "No," he declared, "I am keeping Gambetta in reserve." And he sent for Jules Ferry. Jules Ferry had made great strides at the Ministry of Public Instruction. Solid and uncompromising, this robust Vosgian seemed at first a little rugged, like the flint of his native mountains; but, beneath a chilling exterior, he was good-natured and tactful, and his soul was ardent and courageous. He kept almost the same Cabinet, with Barthélemy St. Hilaire, a former henchman of Thiers, at the Foreign Office, and Sadi Carnot at the Public Works.

On December 12, at the Sorbonne, Gambetta proclaimed his adherence to the Positivist school and described Auguste Comte as "the most powerful thinker of the age." Already, in 1873, at the dinner given in Littré's honour to celebrate the completion of his Dictionary, he had evinced his leanings towards Positivism: "There will come a day when statecraft, restored to its true functions, no longer a profession for dexterous wire-pullers, no longer a field for disloyal and treacherous manœuvres, for corrupt practices, for all those tactics of hypocrisy and evasion, will become what it should be, a moral science and a standard of justice for human societies."

We sometimes hear of Gambetta's "philosophy." He scarcely gave a thought to metaphysics, he did not indulge (as has been aptly remarked) in "that habit of restless questioning which we cultivate under the name of philosophy." In his younger days he had been a Deist, and had expended no little rhetoric on the subject. The teachings of Auguste Comte had at this time a widespread influence. They corresponded pretty closely to the views held by most men of science, especially by those who were experimentalists before everything and distrustful of theory. Some of them have shown that this Positivism was over-simplified, and ought to

be extended by a more searching analysis. Comte declared that the chemical composition of the heavenly bodies was for ever unknowable; a few years later spectral analysis was invented. Other men of science have pointed out that there are certain fundamental problems which science can never solve. Gambetta, for his part, did not go so far; he cried a halt at the unknowable, and at "relativity" in philosophy as in politics. For him, science was the last word in wisdom.

His enemies banded together to attack him. A pamphlet entitled "Gambetta Spells War!" ran into a hundred thousand copies. The involuntary author of this unrest, he now became its victim. He was hard pressed on the one side by the impatience of his friends, on the other by the hatred of his foes. He could not repress a sense of irritation and disgust. What public man has not known such moments? He writes: "All our guests were enchanted with your beautiful flowers. You know what I still want to fill the cup of my happiness—your presence at these entertainments and the good that you always find an opportunity of doing on these occasions. You have only one word to say, one sign to give (before the Mayor,[1] it is true); but it is brief, if heroic, and we shall enter into the Promised Land—mark you, *promised!*" (Feb. 13, 1881.)

In January he was re-elected President of the Chamber by 262 votes out of a total of 307. Foreign suspicions having been hinted at, he tried to blunt the edge of controversy: "France," he said, "harbours no secret designs or adventures." Yet his finger was traced in every pie; he was charged with having influenced the Government's policy over the affairs of Greece. Bismarck, astonished at the Cherbourg speech, had said: "Gambetta, at the head of the French Ministry, would act upon the nerves of Europe like a man beating a drum in a sick-room." Jules Ferry and Barthélemy St. Hilaire feared complications; they were anxious not to make it look as if they were obeying the will of another. In

[1] This refers to the civil marriage ceremony (see the close of Chapter XV.).—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

the debates in the Chamber, Gambetta was put on his defence; and he "takes upon himself the right to speak," pointing out that he has not been called upon to declare himself. "As for the policy of the Government, I put my trust in it, but I have to do so with my eyes shut. I am not bound to say whether I have a policy or whether that policy would differ from that of the Government. I have my own feelings, my own views, about foreign affairs, and *I can bide my time.*"—The position was becoming more and more false for everybody.

He went on to explain his Cherbourg speech: "For a whole week after my speech at Cherbourg, no one noticed in it any threatening or provocating language, any criminal design. An interval was needed, until the comments upon it should be warped by passion or prejudice. And when the comments were made, the word was passed round, and these charges were made to appear the general verdict of the country. My speech at Cherbourg was no more bellicose than the one delivered at the same time and under the same circumstances by the President of the Republic."

It was not for the President of the Chamber to say whether he trusted or distrusted the Government. What sort of a life would a Cabinet have when the President of the Republic kept the sword of Damocles hanging over it: "*I can bide my time*"?

In order to put an end to his period of expectancy, he needed the comprehensive ballot, the one that admits of agreements, compacts and reconciliations between individuals and between the various shades of opinion within the party. The Ministers were not at one. Jules Ferry declared that the Government would remain neutral. The Elysée started a campaign for the maintenance of the *scrutin d'arrondissement.*[1] On May 19, 1881, Gambetta once more came down from the chair, and in all the fulness of his talent, with all the wealth of his oratorical resources, made one of his most famous speeches. First of all, he repudiated the idea that he was thinking, in his own interest, of multiple or "plebis-

[1] See note, p. 196.

citary" candidatures, that might "impair the authority and prestige of the Executive." In speaking of the Republican elections of July, 1871, to 1875, elections which "fully expressed the voice of the whole country, and not that of a mere *arrondissement,* he ventured on the famous simile: "a sort of shattered mirror in which France would not have recognised her own image." With the 363, it was the unified *liste* that had triumphed. They could not hope to establish a republican Government, capable of discharging its duties, without placing the consultation of the country on the broadest possible basis. When it was a question of representing France, in other words the highest moral entity in the world, they might well ask themselves whether those chosen would represent a hundred thousand electors, or six thousand. And how could they deal with the larger issues, administrative, judicial, military and economic? "Certain principles have made you what you are, and you cannot depart from those principles. The future lies in your hands; it depends upon you whether a party fit to hold the reins of government shall come into being, a party that is solid and sincere, to lead France to the end of her glorious destinies. Surely you have no wish to incur the reproach of the Roman poet: 'To save their life, they threw away all that makes life worth living': *Propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.*"

The *scrutin de liste* was approved. Gambetta had triumphed; the road was clear. . . . But now the wind was to veer round once more.

He had promised to be present at the unveiling of a monument erected in his native city to the men of the Lot department who had fallen in the war. He was given an enthusiastic reception. He let himself go, launched out into a patriotic harangue, and sang the praises of President Grévy. "Another good tug at the rope of universal suffrage, and we shall have all this aggregation of effort and goodwill placed under a free and stable government." He gave his hearers to understand that if the Senate passed the *scrutin de liste,* it would obviate a revision of the Constitution such as had already been proposed in the Chamber. "This country has

now enjoyed a Constitution for five years. True, it is no law of the Medes and Persians; it is open to improvement; it will be improved, and in a democratic direction; but we must not be in a hurry, and until the house is secure, until it has properly settled, we must do nothing to disturb any of its courses. Let us not raise objections to everything at once, let us not say that this Constitution, our saviour and our shelter, a rallying-point for all Republican France, needs to be recast out of hand. I only ask you to wait until the powers set up by this Constitution have completed their circuit."

He could not contain himself; he cried out: "I have never seen anything to touch this ceremony; the very earth and sky are taking part in it, and it is the most splendid affair of the kind that anyone has been privileged to witness on his native heath." (May 26, 1881.) But this time he goes too far; the cup overflows. One is reminded of Louis Napoleon's tours in 1851. This is indeed the "dictatorship"!

On June 3, in the Senate, Waddington, in introducing the Bill, points out the danger of "a partial plebiscite, department by department." The same difficulty had risen in the case of Thiers, in 1871; but in 1871 Thiers stood by himself; now, there were established authorities, the President of the Republic, the Senate, the Cabinet. There was reason to apply to Gambetta what had been said earlier of Lamartine: "He is a comet whose orbit no man can calculate." Waddington exposed the danger of multiple elections, which throw the machinery of the Constitution out of gear, upset the balance of power and reduce the Presidency of the Republic to a cipher. "How can you expect that the President, confronted by the nominee of a million or a million and a half voters throughout a large number of departments, should remain free to pick and choose his ministers?" (The truth of this was seen later in the Boulangist crisis, and the system of multiple elections was then abolished.) The Senate refused to proceed to a discussion of the separate clauses.

The very next day, Gambetta, exasperated at this, made a right-about turn and declared himself in favour of revising

the Constitution, the only way, he maintained, of battering down the resistance of the Senate. It must be admitted that such abrupt changes of front were apt to shake the people's faith in the merits of the institutions that they had been so often called upon to admire. They seemed to betray, not merely in the Government, but in the whole constitutional system, that instability with which the Republic had been so often taunted by its enemies. Jules Ferry said, with his robust common sense: "You don't pull up a tree to see if it has taken firm root." Many Republicans thought that this Tours speech looked too much as if it had been composed on the spur of the moment. It showed too great an eagerness to take short cuts. J.-J. Weiss, with all the zeal of a convert, wrote, by way of apology for Gambetta: "Repulsed by the Right, he was compelled to fall back upon the Left." A very weak argument. Tactics of this kind are not permissible in politics. The point at issue was not whether the constitutional changes he proposed for the Senate were good or bad in themselves; an equality of suffrage for each commune, with regard to its population, and the irremovability of Senators were two principles difficult to maintain in an equalitarian democracy and certain to disappear sooner or later. What did call for censure was the suddenness of the manœuvre, quite out of keeping with his recent pronouncements and his whole political theory. Some sage observers looked upon his action as an outburst of ill-temper against the Senate, a sort of revenge on the part of a spoilt child of fortune, who would not be baulked of his will in any particular. Jules Ferry, swept off his feet, was obliged in his turn to reverse his judgment and support the plan of a revision; the position of his Ministry had become critical.

The elections were fixed for August 21. The twentieth *arrondissement* of Paris, which had elected Gambetta four times, was now, owing to the growth in its population, split up into two constituencies. Gambetta offered himself in both. There was a spice of personal vanity, blended with shrewdness, in his notion of keeping Belleville while conquering France. On August 12 he held his first meeting at the Elysée-

Ménilmontant. Here he was "face to face with that other Monster, more massive and harder to tackle than the Monster of Varzin." Faithful to his word, he had had no intention, he said, of coming forward anywhere else. He protested against the outrageous calumny that he was exercising a "dictatorship." "They don't speak of my dictatorship of May 24 and May 16!" They have found a new name for his policy—"a misbegotten compound of Latin and Greek"—"opportunism." "If this barbarous word means an astute policy, which never fails to take time by the forelock, to make the most of favourable contingencies, but never leaves anything to chance, never allows free play to the spirit of violence—then they may apply to my policy, as often as they like, this ill-sounding and not even intelligible epithet; but I will only say that I know no other, for it is the policy of sound sense, and, I may add, the policy of success."

He warms up to his work, recalling the bloody defeats of the old Republican party, the excesses followed by reactions, and the alarm shown by the "governing classes" of the bourgeoisie. "All these things induced me to break with the past, and say to myself: 'You will give up your life to diverting the spirit of violence which has so often led the democracy astray. You will warn democracy to beware of dogmatising. You will guide it towards the study of facts, of concrete realities. You will reveal yourself as a sort of mediator between the interests of both sections, and if you succeed in bringing about that alliance of the people with the bourgeoisie, you will have set the Republican order upon an unassailable foundation."

After dwelling on the work that has already been achieved, he glances at the future. He has no intention of changing his method: "My method is, not to cope with all the problems at once, not to make a frontal attack along the whole line or, if I may put it differently, to bring all the bricks for the house at one load, but to approach questions one after another, in their proper order." Reforms in the judicature; the reduction of the term of military service to three years, compulsory for all, without any exemptions, and with full

cadres of N.C.O.s (this makes three stages—in 1872 it was he who had helped Thiers to get the five years' term, in 1876 it was he who caused it to be retained, and now in 1881 he lays down these essential conditions for a reduction in the term of service); legislation on trades-unions and mortmain; a strict enforcement of the Concordat; an income-tax. He puts his finger on the weak spots: "We are living under a democracy, not under a system of privilege. When I uphold the independence of the Government, I maintain that I am more Liberal, more democratic than those who want everything to be left at the mercy of rivalries, of backstair intrigues, of parliamentary chicane." A believer in political centralisation, he demands administrative decentralisation; he would like to see each municipality enjoying its full rights, with powers to administer its property, to borrow, to mortgage its risks and to be undisputed master in the sphere of its local interests.

In foreign affairs, there is only one thing that he asks for: that we should be firm and dignified, keeping our hands clean and not letting them be tied; to show no special favour to any individual Power in Europe, but to be on good terms with all alike. In a letter of June 5, 1875, he writes: "Our *rôle* is to be, like the Sosie in Molière ['s *Amphitryon*], a friend to all the world, free in our movements, and to avoid the collision as long as possible." He reverts to the theme of the Cherbourg speech: "Who would make bold to say that there will not come a day of mutual agreement on a basis of justice in our old Europe? . . . I do not think I am passing beyond the bounds of political prudence when I express a desire that *my* Government, *my* Republic, shall be attentive, watchful, always courteously asserting her right to interpose in affairs that concern her throughout the world, but never giving way to the spirit of incendiarism, of conspiracy and of aggression. And I hope I shall see the day when, through the ascendency of law, of truth and of justice, we shall be once more united with our lost brethren."

By this warm, sincere and heartfelt utterance he recovers and retains his grip on his party; he tames the most rebel-

lious; he is homely, ironical, vehement by turns; he allays their fears, quells their murmurs, and, while handling the driest problems for a space of several hours, amuses them and makes them laugh. A strange and moving sight: this one man, alone, confronting a vast assemblage whose feelings have been wrought upon and who, with the memory of his great services still fresh in their minds, none the less begin to doubt, begin to ask themselves whether to-day his policy is not too slow, too time-serving.

On the other hand, such phrases as "not letting our hands be tied," "on good terms with all alike," caused no little astonishment to those of his friends who shortly before had heard him, in his private intercourse, advocate an understanding with England and an alliance with Russia. In reality, he had not changed his mind—his first acts as Foreign Minister were soon to prove this—but he feared that he might give offence to Bismarck by any public statement of his real views; that the Chancellor, who dreaded nothing so much as these alliances, might thus be induced to draw closer to St. Petersburg; and that his own designs, if announced to the world, might come to grief. He might speak in an undertone of his desire for an alliance with Russia; but would it be wise to proclaim it from the house-tops? He thought that Russia would become an ally for offensive purposes, but that demonstrations of Franco-Russian friendship would only serve to irritate Germany and make her threats more dangerous. Even M. de Freycinet, who was amazed at the Belleville pronouncement, points this out in his *Souvenirs*, a mine of priceless information for the history of this period: "Germany," Gambetta told him, "would like to attract us into her orbit and wean us away from England and Russia; let us maintain a correct attitude; let us keep the alliance with those two Powers as a reserve for the future." (July 28, 1881.) "We must not neglect our friends in Russia and England. But there must be no alliance just yet; it would be dangerous. Bismarck is watching us; let us give him no handle." (September 2.) And he remarked to Jules Hansen (*L'Alliance franco-russe*): "France is condemned to play an insignifi-

ant part in Europe, and must keep very quiet until she has a eally strong army. The task that lies before us at present is o create that army. . . . When this weapon is fit for use, we hall find allies, I have no fears on that score; and then, like ou, I shall be in favour of an alliance with Russia. I have ften discussed this prospect with General Skobeleff, for vhom I have a great liking and respect."

M. de Freycinet himself, by the way, had taken up this very ine at the Quai d'Orsay. Waddington, when giving him the ortfolio, had said: "Russia is disposed to make a compact vith us, but Prince von Bismarck has his eye on us. The nenace of a Franco-Russian treaty might decide him to open ostilities. Read St. Vallier's despatches; they are very nstructive." (Freycinet, *Souvenirs*, II., 110.)

It seemed to Gambetta that any public statement in favour f a Franco-Russian agreement would at this moment arouse he suspicions, not only of Germany, but even of England. Then, too, an alliance with Russia, if it was to bear full fruit, nust be manipulated with great discretion. If ever it became n excuse for noisy demonstrations to serve the interests of ome politics, Germany would clearly exert herself to the tmost in order to deflect its course. And an alliance with o firm guiding hand, one that was allowed to drift, one in vhich the savings of French thrift, instead of being used to ur advantage, would be turned against us—to Gambetta, no oubt, such an alliance would have been meaningless. It nay plausibly be conjectured that, if he had lived, we should ot have lost twelve years in coming to terms with Russia, nd twenty years in coming to terms with England. For uch an alliance, handled with firmness and discretion, the ime was not yet ripe. That is why, from 1876 to 1881, he as far more reticent on the subject of alliances in his speeches han in his private letters, so that some imagined that he was ss eager to form them and others that he was bent upon venging 1870.

Four days later, on August 16, another public meeting was eld in another constituency, at Charenton. It was in the

Rue St. Blaise, an enclosure walled round by canvas, partly covered, badly lighted; there were no seats, and much overcrowding and jostling ensued. It was raining. Eight thousand persons were packed into this space. His first words were interrupted by shouts. He tried to go on, but the shouting increased. Sides were taken for and against him. Whenever he came forward, the uproar started again. In the rare intervals of calm, struggling for over an hour, Gambetta, exhausted, indignant, hurled forth, in a raucous voice, his famous invectives: "Are *you* the people of Paris? . . . I only ask you to hear me. . . . What, when I have come here . . . What, you are powerless to restore order? . . . You accuse me of being a dictator! Do you know what you are? Do you know? You are drunken slaves, not responsible for your actions! . . . The ballot of true and loyal citizens will atone for this infamous treatment! . . . Yes, mark what I say, I shall manage to track you down to your innermost lairs! . . ." He would have done them too much honour!

He secured an absolute majority in the first constituency, a relative majority in the second, and announced that he would remain Deputy for the first. A trivial incident, a mere molehill of which his opponents made a mountain. His popularity in the country as a whole was unimpaired.

At his left, the uncompromising brigade were led by M. Clemenceau, already known as a keen polemical journalist, the wielder of a caustic pen, sharp as a scalpel, with his brilliant staff of *La Justice*, Camille Pelletan, Georges Laguerre, Stéphen Pichon, Alexandre Millerand, who were also destined, each after his own fashion, to cut a conspicuous figure in Parliamentary debates and in the affairs of the country. On an intermediate plane between Clemenceau and Gambetta were now to be found old friends of the latter, such as Henri Brisson and Charles Floquet, for even they thought him too slow-moving, too conciliatory. Thus, while he was steadily drawing nearer to supremacy, he felt the ground caving in beneath his feet. He was taxed with having flinched from his position on the disestablishment of the Church, with having altered his attitude on standing armies,

on the Single-Chamber system, and on the Presidency of the Republic, and with playing fast and loose over the income-tax. How far he was now from 1869! His adversaries branded these inconsistencies with the all-embracing name of "opportunism." Yet how many of those who flung this taunt at him were to find it recoil upon their own heads! Things wear a totally different aspect according as men are in opposition or in power. Unfortunately, the country has to pay dear for these training-courses in political wisdom. In France, on the other hand, the past is soon buried, so that public men can afford to make light of their mistakes. The Frenchman forgets everything, never looks ahead, and lives for the moment. All that is expected from those who, in perfect good faith, have changed their mind, is that they shall show some indulgence for others who, while they saw what was coming, have had no reason to shift their ground and have been able to make their conclusions tally with their premises.

The ballot of 1881 sent to the Palais-Bourbon 467 Republicans and 90 Conservatives. The Right lost some sixty seats. Jules Ferry and Gambetta commanded a majority of 400. The gains of the Extreme Left amounted to 40.

The country had marked out Gambetta for office. Early in September he went on a tour in Normandy, and at Neubourg delivered a speech on State policy. Peaceful Normandy, the proverbial "land of the canny" (*pays de sapience*), with its shrewd, calculating spirit, its distaste for adventures and reckless innovations, was an admirable field for displaying a policy of moderation and prudence. The issue before the electors here was not the personal programme of Gambetta, the candidate for Belleville, but the national programme of Gambetta, the French statesman. The Chamber would have to carry out "the modicum of reform demanded by the country." It would be extremely hazardous to go too far in advance of public opinion. He wanted "a Republic bent upon reforms, but not a Republic of levellers or Utopians."

He seemed now to aim at dissociating himself from the campaign for the *scrutin de liste* and even from the campaign

for a revision of the Constitution. His idea is to make the path smoother for the two Assemblies—for the Senate, which the threat of a revision kept on tenterhooks, and for the Chamber, whose members owed their seats to the *scrutin d'arrondissement*. He reassured the newly elected Deputies by declaring that it would not be wise to revive the question of the ballot system at the outset of the new Parliament's career, and that the matter must be shelved until the expiry of its term, adding the reservation: "or until the Constitution is remodelled, if that step is ever undertaken."

Thus he shelves the question of the ballot system and looks upon a revision of the Constitution merely as a possible contingency. The country regarded the latter course as premature. When speaking at Tours, he had still been smarting under the Senate's adverse vote and the disappointment it caused him; now, he was quite willing to gain time.

He expressed a hope that the Chamber would manage to suppress the rivalries, the personal vendettas, even the most lawful ambitions in its midst, in order to give the country a solid, steady majority, assuring the Government no less weight than the Republic itself possessed. He had every confidence, he declared, in the nominees of universal suffrage.

At Honfleur he dwelt upon the mercantile marine, public works and the seamen's voting registers; at Pont l'Evêque, on the breeding of live-stock. He took another trip to Germany, visiting Bremen, Hamburg, Lubeck and Stettin. He went to Friedrichsruhe, Bismarck being away at the time; on seeing the table, removed from Versailles, on which the peace preliminaries had been signed in 1871, he remarked: "I shall not be satisfied until I have that piece of furniture in my study."

On his return (October 25) he spoke at Le Havre, setting forth the conditions for an economic struggle against Germany: an improvement in our industrial plant; (speaking at Pont-Audemer) a development of our natural resources "along that magnificent stream which is better than the Thames, for it runs between an ocean that washes 1,200 miles of our coast-line and a city that is the capital of the civilised

world." He likes to parade the fact that he knows all about local matters, that he is as solicitous of material as of moral progress, that he has a keen eye for business; he sets up as the champion of the farming, manufacturing, trading and shipping interests.

The Chambers met again on October 28. Gambetta, appointed interim President by 317 votes out of a total of 364, waived all idea of standing for the regular Presidency; in other words, he kept himself at the disposal of the President of the Republic and the majority.

At the Congress of Berlin Bismarck, in the course of his first interview with Lord Beaconsfield, had said: "You ought to come to an understanding with Russia: let her have Constantinople and take Egypt. France would be given Tunisia or Syria by way of compensation." We have seen how the British Ministers took Cyprus and offered us Tunisia, and how the French Government had not thought it right to respond to England's overtures. Waddington had not made public the despatches which had passed between him and London. Some weeks later, a rumour having appeared in the Press to the effect that Bismarck had offered Tunisia to Italy, Waddington directed our ambassador in Rome, the Marquis de Noailles, to warn the Italian Government: "It is absolutely essential that the Italian Government should clearly understand that Italy cannot cherish dreams of conquest in Tunisia without coming into collision with France's will and risking a conflict with her." Italy thus had a fair warning. She knew, too, the attitude of the British Government; a Deputy announced in the Italian Chamber, on July 21, 1879, that "England would give France a free hand in Tunis."

The Bey's Government was tottering; the Regency was menaced by financial collapse, by famine and by revolt. The Italian consul, Maccio, and the French consul, Roustan, backed by Chanzy, the Governor-General of Algeria, were openly at daggers drawn. Since the Congress of Berlin, the question of the country's future had been under discussion. Had the hour come for reaping the fruit of the advantages

gained at the Congress, for guaranteeing the security of Algeria, and stabilising our position in the Mediterranean, opposite Toulon?

Nearly a year elapsed. Albert Grévy, brother of the President, who had succeeded Chanzy as Governor-General of Algeria, wrote letter upon letter asking the home authorities to settle the business once and for all. At last there occurred an incident which compelled France to act. The Government was informed that the railway from Goletta to Tunis—the only line then existing in the country—had just been bought from the Bey's Government by the Rubattino Company, whose steamers plied between Goletta and Palermo, in order to monopolise the whole foreign trade of the Regency for Italy's benefit. Rubattino was a brother-in-law of Crispi. The deed of purchase had been signed at the German Consulate by the Italian Consul. The affair was all the more disconcerting in that the Algerio-Tunisian frontier was completely uncovered.

Everything now depended on Gambetta; he alone could exert pressure, for or against, on public opinion and Parliamentary circles. He had too much feeling for national tradition, too firm a grip on the realities of history, merely to consider France's interests without calculating the chances of success. He knew, as well as anyone, the difference between the Algerian and the Tunisian peoples, between our military resources in 1830 and in 1869, and also between an annexed dependency and a protectorate. It was with these points in mind that he said to Father Charmetant, who had been sent by Cardinal Lavigerie to find out what was going on in the Regency: "You see, Crispi's newspaper is attacking Cardinal Lavigerie and your missionaries; it is doing them an honour by these attacks, for they are worth an army corps to France in Algeria." And when Father Charmetant made a note of this statement, remarking that it "sang a different tune from the old battle-cry, Gambetta retorted, with some heat: "That was a question of home politics; anti-clericalism, you know, is not one of our exports." The advice of the Baron de Courcel, then Director of Political Affairs at the

Foreign Office, turned the scale. "I had no difficulty," said the Baron, "in overcoming his objections, especially so far as Italy was concerned. From that moment I found it all plain sailing. Everywhere I was conscious of his influence, his energy, his radiation, and at the same time of his solicitude, his foresight, his wonderful mastery over men. . . . M. Jules Ferry, in his turn, came to the same decision. He did not appear on the scene till near the end, but his part was essential to the piece; he shouldered the final responsibilities with a firmness that has deservedly won him lasting credit."

On March 31, 1881, it was reported that certain Tunisian tribes from the Kroumirie Mountains had leagued together and had made their way into the province of Constantine and had there killed some French soldiers. A few days later, these raiding parties had swollen into a host of several thousands. Roustan proposed to the Bey concerted action on the frontier by our troops and his, but the Bey, at the promptings of Maccio, refused. On April 4, Jules Ferry announced the matter to the Chambers and proclaimed his intention of restoring order. He asked them to give him 6,000,000 francs for an expeditionary force. These credits were voted by the entire Chamber, with a few dissentient voices, and by the Senate unanimously. Turkey protested, but her advances met with no response from the Powers. Bismarck informed our Ambassador, St. Vallier, that "no obstacles would be put in the way of our action, whatsoever form it might take, even if an annexation were the result." It undoubtedly suited the Chancellor's plans that France's policy should gravitate towards the Mediterranean, as that Austria's should gravitate towards the Danube; but as a matter of fact, so far as Berlin was concerned, we had from that time onward nothing to fear. England had pledged herself to support us. Without England, Italy could do nothing. She was under no delusion as to the true state of affairs. In 1880, General Cialdini had been despatched by the Prime Minister Cairoli to explain to M. de Freycinet that if France established herself in Tunisia, Italy would feel herself entitled to some offset. "In May, 1881," Jules Ferry observes, "Cairoli was disappointed

and surprised, but he was not deceived." The credits had been approved on April 8. On May 11 the French Army (11,000 men, 8,000 of them from Algeria) was before the city of Tunis, and a French squadron entered Bizerta. The Bey accepted the terms offered him by General Bréart, but he obtained the further concession that the French troops should not occupy Tunis. On the following day, May 12, the Chambers reassembled. Jules Ferry disclosed the Treaty of Bardo, setting up a protectorate modelled on that of England in the Native States of India. The Act sanctioning the Treaty was passed in the Chamber on May 23 by a majority of 430 to 1, and in the Senate on the 27th without a single adverse vote.

Gambetta, as soon as the news that the Treaty had been signed reached Paris, had written to Jules Ferry: "My dear friend, I thank you for your note and congratulate you with all my heart upon this speedy and admirable result. Our carping critics will have to recognise it now, with the best grace they can—France is rising again to her old rank as a Great Power. Once more, my heartfelt congratulations. Friday, the 13th (do you believe in omens?)."

Never had so fruitful a campaign been carried through with such rapid strokes. It will earn for Jules Ferry and his colleagues in the work the undying gratitude of France, but at the moment it earned him nothing but murmurs, calumnies and insults. Paris jeered. A section of the Press came to the conclusion that the number of the troops despatched to the Regency was too large, and clamoured for their repatriation; the Government reduced the army of occupation to 15,000 men. An initial blunder had been made in yielding to the Bey's request and not occupying his capital, and a second blunder was made in giving way to the demands of an ill-informed Press. The South of the Regency was in a state of utter chaos. Sfax and Gabès were occupied. Jules Ferry cut short the session of the Chambers (July 29) and fixed the polls for August 21.

The very day after the elections 50,000 men were sent to Tunis, under the command of General Saussier. Kairouan

was occupied (October 26, 1881). By the end of the year peace was restored throughout the whole Regency. Parliament opened on October 28. General Saussier's despatch announcing the occupation of Kairouan was received by the Chamber. One Deputy shouted: "The comedy has missed fire!"

Jules Ferry stated that he was determined to resign, but first he had to say what was on his mind: "To hear people talk one would really think that some national disaster had just befallen us! The Right and Left are never tired of telling us that the Tunisian expedition is a dire misfortune, that it has caused us to lose allies in Europe, that it has disorganised our army, that it must be placed on the same footing as the ever regrettable expedition to Mexico." They allege that France has been rushed into the war without time for reflection; he asks them not to lose sight of realities. "Our real enemy is not the native or the foreigner, it is the apparent uncertainty that prevails as to the true intentions of the French Government. In this debate, two great interests confront each other—a great military interest and a great political interest. These two things should always be sacred to us in the midst of all our discussions. Lay no profane hands on France or on the Army! . . . Some say: "In the event of a European war, would not the position of the military chessmen be altered?" My answer is that it would, but to our advantage, since we are shutting a door through which our territory might be entered."

In all these feverish debates the Chamber's main concern was home politics. The majority tried to come together, and the opposition did its best to prevent this concentration. After four days' wrangling, they were no further than when they started. Twenty-three resolutions had been tabled. Many demanded a formal indictment of the Cabinet, others a court of inquiry; but both schemes were rejected, and the House had no opportunity of expressing either its censure or its confidence.

Finally, amid all this tumult, Gambetta appeared on the scene. "France has appended her signature to the Treaty

of Bardo. I ask the Chamber to declare, in an unequivocal fashion, that the terms of this treaty shall be carried out honestly and wisely, but without any qualification. I therefore propose the following motion: 'The Chamber, determined that the treaty endorsed by the French nation on May 12, 1881, shall be faithfully carried into effect, proceeds to the resolution.' "—This was passed by 355 ayes to 68 noes.

That same night he wrote: "At last we have settled that interminable Tunisian affair. About 9 p.m. all was over, thanks to a fit of indignation which drove me to the rostrum after eighteen successive resolutions had been mooted. I felt unable to endure that France should humble herself in the dust before the whole of Europe, and that is why I interfered. I made them ratify a policy in which the national honour was involved. But my intervention pledges me up to the hilt; I am now compelled to have an interview with the President of the Republic, if he is willing to submit to the 'dictatorship,' since dictatorship it is."

On November 10 Jules Ferry tendered the resignation of the Cabinet, and Gambetta was called upon to form the new Ministry.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GRAND MINISTRY

Gambetta crowns Jules Ferry's Work in Tunisia—The Egyptian Affair—The Bills for a Revision of the Constitution and a *Scrutin de Liste*—Fall of the Ministry (January 26, 1882).

It was not a month since Gambetta, on his return from Germany, had seen the President (October 13). He was marked out for office by the votes of the Chamber, and the time for raising objections was past. On October 22 Daniel Wilson, Under-Secretary of State at the Treasury, had become Jules Grévy's son-in-law; he was a sworn foe of Gambetta. Among Gambetta's opponents there was a spontaneous outburst of glee when they saw that he "could not get out of taking Cabinet honours." The bull was coming into an arena already bristling with picadors. "Now for the Grand Ministry!" was the significant cry. It was an understood thing that there would be a combination of five parliamentary Presidents: Gambetta, Freycinet, Jules Ferry, Léon Say, President of the Senate, Henri Brisson, ex-President of the Chamber. Public opinion welcomed the idea; it seemed a guarantee of unity and strength. Gambetta, too, at first thought he ought to try the experiment. Jules Ferry, however, had suffered defeat, and was opposed to the *scrutin de liste*. Léon Say insisted on the formula: "Neither conversion nor borrowing nor redemption," and Gambetta did not wish to commit himself so far. He had seen M. de Freycinet on September 16, and had told him that he was anything but anxious to take office, that his health would not allow him to bear the burden very long, but that on the other hand he could not back out altogether. He had asked his own fellow-worker to help in the task of Cabinet-making:

"It will be our joint product," he added, "and the management of it I will leave to you, for I don't want to remain in harness for more than a few months; after that I shall have to retire, to take a rest and travel about Europe. You will be given the War Office portfolio and act as my right-hand man." On November 11 Gambetta paid another visit to M. de Freycinet, and again asked for his co-operation, but by now some changes had been made in the proposed list of Ministers. The names of Jules Ferry and Léon Say had been struck off, and Freycinet was to become Minister for Foreign Affairs instead of for War. Most of the new men who were ultimately to be members of the Cabinet were now included. After taking a night to think things over, M. de Freycinet wrote to Gambetta saying that he did not feel capable of adequately filling the post which the future Prime Minister had allotted to him, and requesting that he might be allowed to keep his seat in the Senate, where he would always remain a loyal and devoted friend.

Gambetta's intention was to assume the Premiership without portfolio. Henceforth, the Prime Minister alone would communicate with the President of the Republic. The latter would no longer take the chair at Cabinet meetings. It was a startling reversal of constitutional practice. The Premier, as in England, would become the real and sole head of the Government. It is not hard to imagine how Grévy looked upon these innovations—Grévy, who had always managed to keep his Cabinet meetings well under control.

The days were slipping past, however, and matters could be delayed no longer. Gambetta had a notion that the refusals he was encountering were part of a pre-arranged plan, and shrewdly suspected that the Élysée had a hand in the business. On November 8 he writes to Les Jardies: "I got your letter, and I am answering it before going to rack my brains over that abominable Cabinet problem. Yes, it would be much pleasanter to be at Zuppat, or, better still, at Sorrento. There is still time. Do you feel like eloping? I am ready, and I—or rather *we*—can run away. One word, one little 'yes,' and we are free for ever! . . ."

THE GRAND MINISTRY

On November 15 the *Journal Officiel* [Gazette] published the names of the new Cabinet. Gambetta was to take the Foreign Office with the Presidency of the Council [Premiership], and was assigning the Ministry of Justice to Jules Cazot, that of the Interior to Waldeck-Rousseau, that of War to General Campenon, that of Marine to Captain Gougeard, that of Public Instruction and Worship to Paul Bert, that of Finance to Allain-Targé, that of Public Works to Raynal, that of Commerce and the Colonies to Rouvier, that of Agriculture to Devès, that of Fine Arts to Antonin Proust, the Under-Secretaryship of Foreign Affairs to Spuller, that of the Colonies to Felix Faure, etc. The list was at once greeted with contempt: "A Ministry of Government clerks!" "A Cabinet of nonentities!" Gambetta had had to take a firm stand before he could include young Waldeck-Rousseau, a fluent speaker, excelling in the frigid style of oratory, though inwardly of a fiery temperament. The only senatorial member was Cazot, and this exclusion of senators was not likely to find favour with the Luxembourg. Two new Ministries were created, and the Chambers had to be asked for the necessary credits.

The Ministerial announcement of policy—a limited revision of the Constitution, a cutting down of military expenditure, a strict enforcement of the Concordat, etc.—met with a chilling reception in both Assemblies. (November 15.)

A "limited revision": here was the field for the coming battle: the senators feared a diminution of their powers, the Deputies trembled for their very existence. Barodet introduced a proposal for "unlimited" revision. He asked for an emergency vote. This was opposed by Gambetta, and then supported by Clemenceau. Gambetta replied, and carried the day.

On December 8 the supplementary credits for the two new Ministries and Under-Secretaryships were discussed. Under the Waddington Cabinet, a Decree of February 5, 1879, instituting a Postmaster-General, had evoked no criticism. The committee, however, expressed a desire that in future no new Ministerial post should be created without the previous con-

sent of both Houses. This was tantamount to a censure. Gambetta asked the Chamber to repudiate the suggestion. M. Ribot, with a skill and adroitness which foreshadowed the great part he was to play, succeeded in getting it retained.

Gambetta was under no illusion; he saw that he would not be able to govern with a majority thus torn by dissensions. He knew that he was expected to work miracles, and he also knew that to work those miracles was beyond his capacity. We needed superior military strength, and this—as he had once more found out by personal observation—Germany still possessed: we needed alliances, and the time for those alliances was not yet ripe. He cherished the same dream as every statesman worthy of the name, the vision of a France united, reconciled, massing all her forces for a great external action—the vision that was to become a reality thirty-three years later, under the impact of a fresh German assault, when, if he had lived, he would have been sixty-three. But he had to deal with furiously warring parties, with political and religious animosities skilfully fanned by the victor, with Assemblies that shivered at the slightest puff of wind. The man of 1870 bore 1914 in his soul; but the man of 1870 was not destined to be the man of 1914. Fortune, which had showered on him all her gifts at thirty, was to desert him at forty.

Physically he was not up to the mark. That feverish, wearing existence, "unbalanced," as he used to call it, that constant delirium of passion, the excitement of the war and of Parliamentary struggles, that portentous career had aged him before his time; he was tired. He was beginning to be affected, too (though he would never openly admit it), by the calumnies and insults which his enemies relentlessly heaped upon him—a cup of bitterness that he was to drink to the last minute, to the last drop.

When someone suggested that he should refuse the burden, he had replied: "And what of all those who are reckoning upon me?" Yet he did nothing to win over the majority. Quite the contrary! Waldeck-Rousseau was so bold as to write to a prefect [chief magistrate of a department]: "A system of Government resting on the notion that the opinion

of a prefect counts for nothing, and that the recommendation of a Deputy is everything, would be a system fatal alike to the independence of the electorate and to that of Ministers." Scandalous! Gambetta had said at Tours: "The administration is the steward of the democracy; if you lay a finger on any of its prerogatives, you undermine the whole structure." And at Belleville: "The administration is no longer master in its own house, the executive ceases to control its agents, when they are no longer left in undisputed exercise of their functions." The Republicans were too near to the Empire, to the Twenty-fourth of May, to the Sixteenth of May, not to distrust what was known as a "strong" Government. The difference between a solid and enduring parliamentary authority and personal rule had not yet taken clear shape in men's minds. The Parliamentary Republic had not yet found its level; for the Government, direction and action; for Parliament, deliberation and control. The body politic had not yet recovered from the recent ordeals of despotism and oppression. The mentality of its leading men was still littered with wreckage.

General de Miribel, who on May 16 had been instructed, with Ducrot, to prepare for a mobilisation of the Army in the event of a second dissolution, was appointed Chief of the General Staff; Marshal Canrobert, then a Bonapartist Senator for the Dordogne Department, and General Gallifet, who had suppressed the Commune, were placed upon the Army Council; J.-J. Weiss, an Alsatian in origin and in spirit, who had been Broglie's Councillor of State, was appointed, in default of Albert Sorel, Director of Political Affairs at the Foreign Office, in succession to Baron de Courcel, who became ambassador in Berlin; Floquet went to the prefecture of the Seine Department, Magnin to the Banque de France, and so on. In technical matters, Gambetta ranked competence as more important than political views. "For government, you want a party," he used to say; "for administration, capable men, irrespective of party." The same course had been pursued by Danton, when he entrusted the War Ministry and that of Foreign Affairs to men who had served under the Monarchy.

It was difficult, however, even on these grounds, to accept Weiss and Miribel; and many Republicans felt qualms at the selection of such inveterate foes ere the noise of battle had yet died down, and thought that it boded ill for the maintenance of existing institutions.

A question was put to the Minister of War concerning the appointment of General de Miribel: "You place the Republic," exclaimed Clovis Hugues, "at the mercy of those who have always tried to deal it its death-blow!" General Campenon had already spoken once, and was about to return to the charge; the Prime Minister pointed out that, where a question was concerned, the rules of procedure would not permit of this reply. "Don't speak," cried Henri Marot to the General. "Cæsar forbids!" Gambetta: "Why don't you talk French!" Maret: "Very well, I won't say 'Cæsar,' I'll say 'Vitellius!'"

All the time, too, the agony raged within. The cruel exertions of public life were telling upon him more than ever. He wrote to his belovèd: "I had a bad night, and all the solace that you brought me, the moral balm that you applied to my soul, the hope that you had roused in me had not worked enough reaction to banish the wretched fever!" (November 29.) "Believe me, my dear child, you can save us both; yes, save us, for without you my life is empty and desolate, has no more value or charm." (December 7.) "A new year will soon dawn for us; we are still at liberty to change our lot. . . . You have drained the cup of sorrow to the dregs; and I, without losing my calm or balance, have known the dizziest heights of happiness, all that is conventionally called the sweets of power and fame. Yet I count this as nothing without you, without your love, your presence, your requital for an unkind destiny. Let us open a new stage of life together; come to my heart and stay there. . . ." (December 9.)

Nevertheless, he did not turn aside from the path of duty He confirmed the Treaty of Bardo, thus crowning Jules Ferry's work in Tunisia. In the Senate, the Duc de Broglie picked holes in the treaty, asked for "more effective territorial

guarantees," and professed to see certain dangers for France in having Turkey as a neighbour. Gambetta's reply was marked by restraint and good humour, and showed perfect deference towards the Senate; he obtained his credits by a unanimous vote. (December 10.)

At St. Petersburg Alexander III. had succeeded his father, Alexander II., who had been assassinated on March 13, 1881. Increasing symptoms of a desire for a Franco-Russian understanding were noted. Katkoff was the trusted adviser of the new Tsar. Skobeleff, who made no concealment of his hatred for German supremacy, was preparing to visit Paris. Gambetta appointed as Ambassador in Russia his favourite agent Chaudordy. He had ideas of sending the Duc d'Aumale, as Envoy Extraordinary of the Republic, to Alexander III.'s coronation. He has often been credited with the phrase: "Leaning on London and on St. Petersburg, we shall be invincible." If he never said it, at any rate he thought it, and he put the maxim into practice.

The Egyptian question, however, was to give a new trend to the policy of France and of Europe.

France and the Nile share the honour of having made Egypt. Our scholars, our soldiers, our engineers, our manufacturers, our traders, our jurists had wrought the prosperity of the country. It was France that had set up courts of justice and an educational system. There were then in Egypt 18,000 Frenchmen, among them being representatives of our leading industries. All the Government departments were run by French agents. The Suez Canal was the achievement of a Frenchman. Egypt was France's adopted daughter. England, however, had bought the Khedive's holding in the Canal. In December, 1875, Gambetta had vainly besought the Duc Decazes, Minister for Foreign Affairs, to purchase the 176,000 shares which the Khedive offered us for sale. He promised that the entire Left would support the operation. There had then been introduced, in 1879, the dual control by England and France. It bound England as it bound us; it insured us a share of control strictly on a par with that of England. Thanks to this system, the national debt had been

reduced, taxation lightened, and usury put down. In Gambetta's eyes, the *condominium* in the Nile Valley was the cornerstone of the Anglo-French entente. Thiers had warned him: "Whatever you do, never let go of Egypt!"

An anti-foreign agitation had recently broken out among the officers in Cairo. On September 10, 1881, Colonel Arabi had invested the Khedive's palace, demanding that the notables should be convened, a Constitution drawn up, and the Army effectives (which had been reduced to 4,000) should be raised to 18,000. The Khedive had been forced to submit. The Dual Control was badly shaken. Turkey took advantage of this, and made an attempt to recover her ancient heritage; the Sultan sent Turkish emissaries to Cairo. The Paris and London Cabinet agreed to have them watched by two battleships, one French and the other British, detached to Alexandria.

On December 14 Gambetta, in his first conversation with Lord Lyons, the British Ambassador, revealed himself as a staunch advocate of the entente: "Would it be wise for France and England to let themselves be caught unawares by some catastrophe? The two Governments should come to an agreement as regards the most suitable means, either of averting a crisis, if the explosion can be prevented, or of applying remedies, if it is unavoidable."

The British Government, however, had no wish to see France taking control in the affair. This was amply proved by the remarks passed at the Congress of Berlin, and by a note from Lord Granville to Sir Edward Malet, Consul-General at Cairo, on November 4, 1881, the contents of which were communicated to the Cabinet in Paris. It was couched in guarded terms. On December 23 Lord Lyons replied to Gambetta: "Her Majesty's Government is of opinion that the cordial understanding that exists on the subject of Egypt must assuredly be made manifest, but that there is room for mature consideration to determine the conduct to be adopted in the event of a fresh outbreak of the disturbances."

Gambetta, seizing hold of Lord Granville's statement that "the cordial understanding that exists on the subject of

Egypt must be made manifest," insisted that "the attachment between the two Powers should not remain merely at the Platonic stage." Anxious that "a clear-cut and definite object should be pursued by both in common," he proposed that the two Governments should instruct their representatives to give Tewfik Pasha positive assurance of the sympathy and support of France and England, and to encourage His Highness to maintain and strengthen his own authority."

On January 6 Lord Lyons wrote to Gambetta: "Her Majesty's Government concurs in the recommendations set forth in your Note of December 30, on the strict understanding that it must not be regarded as thereby committing itself to any particular mode of action, should action prove necessary."

The plan of a joint note was thus accepted, but the questions of "action" and "mode of action" were held over. Lord Granville remarked to our Ambassador, Challemel-Lacour: "The most important thing is, not that France and England should really work in harmony, but that they should appear to do so." Challemel-Lacour left no doubt as to the half-hearted attitude shown by Lord Granville. He wrote on January 17 that "if the London Cabinet had considered the possibility of effective action, it was only to reject the idea."

The initiative taken by the two Western Powers had given umbrage to the Porte and the other Cabinets. They saw or professed to see in it an encroachment upon their rights and a breach of the statute which had been granted to Egypt under their guarantee. Gambetta, in order to learn their intentions, made inquiries of our *chargé d'affaires* in Berlin, the Comte d'Aubigny. The latter replied on January 10 that if fresh troubles should arise, Germany, Russia, Austria and Italy would not sanction the landing of Anglo-French forces on the banks of the Nile; the only way to cut the knot, in their opinion, would be "the despatch of Turkish regiments after a previous understanding between the Porte and the Cabinets of London and Paris, supplemented, if need were, by a naval demonstration on the part of those two Powers." Further, on the 17th: "According to information which reaches us

from a trustworthy source, England has consulted Prince von Bismarck; the Chancellor, in his answer, expressed the fear that Russia, Italy and Austria could not look on unmoved at the intervention of France and England. The Prince's view was that a concerted military action by England and France in Egypt should be avoided at all costs." (On the 31st he wrote again, to the same effect.) On the 24th, Challemel wrote to Gambetta: "I am afraid that Lord Granville is not disposed to accept the intervention of any other Power." The British Ambassador in Berlin, with the object of getting us evicted, was exerting all his influence both upon Bismarck and upon our representative. Bismarck, for his part, was trying at one and the same time to consolidate Germany's position at Constantinople and to cause a rift between France and England. We shall see how he succeeded.

At home, Gambetta had left nothing out of the reckoning. In this Chamber, the forces against him were too strong; he came to office too late or too soon; why wear himself out, why row laboriously in the teeth of adverse winds? No, his hour had not struck, and he knew it. And he, he who had said to wise Normandy that it would be "childish" to ask the Chamber to change the method of ballot that had brought it into being, now drew his sword once more from the scabbard and held it to Parliament's throat. He or the Chamber: did he think that it would offer no resistance?

On January 12, 1881, he writes: "The storm is gathering, the clouds are massing; there is little reason to doubt that the deluge will burst upon my head in a few days' time. I shall put the question fairly and squarely, I shall lay all my cards on the table: double or quits! Either they will pass under the Caudine Forks,[1] or I shall let them wallow in their hopeless impotence. I feel, not only free, but more determined. Fate will decide." "Double or quits!" Yes, that summed up the position. He would either triumph or perish, but perish only to rise again, in full strength, at a later day.

[1] A pass through which the defeated Roman army was forced by the Samnites to march under the yoke, 321 B.C.—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

On the 14th he brought forward his scheme for constitutional revision. His idea was that the Constitution should lay down the system of ballot for the Chamber, as it already did for the Senate. For the election of Senators, he wished to make the number of delegates from the boroughs proportional to the number of their inhabitants; for the irremovable Senators elected by the Senate, he substituted Senators elected for a term of nine years by both Assemblies; finally, in matters of finance, he was for giving the first and the last word to the Chamber.

The committee charged with examining the scheme was almost entirely hostile. "Gambetta wants to reign supreme in the Chamber," said one Deputy; "we must choose between the Chamber and him." "The President of the Republic," said Wilson, the moving spirit of the coalition, "is opposed to the project."

On January 19, Gambetta writes: "So at last the clouds are dispersing and I am face to face with my opponents of every stamp. We shall fight in broad daylight. What a splendid battlefield they have just provided for me! It is no longer political methods, texts and constitutional law, public rights and electoral rights that are at stake, but a higher issue: Shall there, or shall there not, be a Government worthy of the name? I owe them a debt of gratitude for having opened the debate, and having assured it, at this critical hour, all the prestige, all the importance it deserves. I am glad to think I can throw myself into a final and glorious struggle, and, come what may, can once more find an opportunity of telling the truth to the country. And then, then I shall cry, like the Prophet, *Liberavi animam meam*, I have set free, I have delivered my soul! I shall rush into the fray with a light heart; for if I win, I have them in the hollow of my hand; if I lose, I am once more my own master!"

On January 24, M. Louis Andrieux, ex-Prefect of Police, witty, mordant, with an "indefinable something" in his intellect, like the Cardinal de Retz, read out his report to the Chamber: "To embody the *scrutin de liste* in the Constitution," he said, "is to condemn our origin and our principles,

to endanger at once the credit and the moral authority essential to every Chamber; it would reveal the campaign for a dissolution, naked and unashamed, and bring it to a head."

The matter was brought up in the House on January 26. From the very first crossing of the foils Gambetta lunges out and uncovers his guard. "This is what they say: 'We recognise the full jurisdiction of the Congress; we recognise the absolute competence of each member of the Senate and the Chamber to raise any question whatsoever; but there is a band of political outcasts in whom we acknowledge neither a right nor a capacity to broach any question—that is, the Ministers."

He attacks the Extreme Left: "I know that a single Chamber, with no counterpoise or brake, with nothing to restrict its movements, is an ideal that still finds favour in the ranks of the democracy. What I also know is that this theory is becoming more and more discredited in the light of events, by the experience of every day. The experience of the past fortnight, for instance, proves how useful, how vitally important it is for a democracy to have an Upper Chamber, if only because it gives everyone time to think things over."

Always put on his defence, forced to explain himself, to interpret his meaning, he keeps nothing back, he bares his tortured soul: "Of all the afflictions that can befall one in political life—and God knows that I have had my share!—there is one that I cannot endure in silence: namely, to be held up to the Republican party as one who is trying to break away from it, to forswear his allegiance. Will anyone dare to stand up in this House and say that I am animated by some vile ambition, graced with the name of 'dictatorship,' which would make me the laughing-stock of the world if I ever sank so low as to cherish so paltry an aim? . . ." The phrases clash and jostle against one another and are lost in the swirling flood. He reminds them of the perils he and they have faced together and shows them the danger of irreparable fissures. "You know me; you know my faults,

and, I make bold to say, my passionate devotion to the service of the Republic. What have I done? Side by side with you, I fought in the open against the enemies of the Republic. We have got rid of our foes; what is left to us now is to govern ourselves, to combat the endless discords that beset us, to overcome our obsession with personalities and keep our eyes riveted on the country. Finally, a sweeping survey of the whole present and the whole future—the future, safe and assured, the clear road to the mountain-tops; later on, at any rate, if they do not wish to open the track now. The advice has been given me: 'Change your hidden power into a real authority.' My answer was: 'Change the electoral laws, and I am ready. I am convinced that, in resisting you, I am acting in the essential interests of State policy. All that I can bring forward, to counteract your fears, is my loyalty, the plans we have prepared together, in a word my whole past career, and I appeal to your sense of right and wrong. At any rate, it will be without bitterness, without feeling a vestige of wounded self-esteem, that I shall bow to your verdict; for there is something that I rank above all ambitions, and that is my trust in the Republicans, without which I can never accomplish what is—I surely have some right to say so—my task in public life, the rehabilitation of our country!'' He was loudly cheered. The Chamber was still dominated by the spell of his oratory, it was still proud of him. Naturally, however, it thought of its own safety first.

M. Andrieux replied. Confidence must be mutual: unless the Government had confidence in the Chamber, it could not ask members for a token of their confidence. No Government could assume office in face of an Assembly with which it thought that it could not work hand in hand. He recalled the recent pronouncements of Gambetta at Le Neubourg. A Chamber which, at its very outset, condemns the source from which it sprang, is stricken with decay and doomed to an early dissolution.

Gambetta was defeated by 268 votes to 218. The Ministers at once trooped out of the Chamber. Early on the following

day he wrote to Les Jardies: "So my forecast has come true to the very day—the blessed day of deliverance! I was already hailing it with delight at heart, that dawn of freedom. Everything that happens must serve as an object-lesson for the future. I don't complain, for I feel instinctively that the country will know better where it stands, and, in a few years' time, will be able to do me justice and return to its genuine traditions. Yesterday evening I tasted the first-fruits of vengeance, although that appetising dish has to be eaten cold. The victors looked very glum; I leave you to imagine whether I showed my mirth too openly!"

The Gambetta Ministry had lasted sixty-three days. It fell under the blows of a coalition in which the Extreme Left, the Right, and the friends of the Élysée joined hands. Yet its chief remained the loftiest embodiment of the Republic, and, for a large number of Frenchmen, the man of the future.

The Extreme Left were indignant at the abandonment of the old Republican programme, the programme of 1869, a single Chamber, disestablishment of the Church, and so forth. They did not want any colonial expeditions, and Gambetta's imperious manner made them restive. The Right was pursuing the course which it was to maintain for thirty years. As for President Grévy, apart from the fact that Gambetta's popularity was not altogether to his liking, and that the journey to Cherbourg still rankled with him, he did not favour *revanche* ideas. Neither the home nor the foreign policy of Gambetta was calculated to please him, and he now felt easier in mind.

Gambetta went off to Nice and from there to Italy. He took up his quarters in Genoa, enjoying its pure, health-giving air, its expanse of silver sea. The blood of his forbears thrilled in his veins. We may give a typical extract from his letters: "I have a sense of excessive loneliness in this great city of marble, where I am always reminded that it was my cradle. I breathe more freely here than anywhere else, and so far from feeling that I am in a strange country, its whole history comes back to me like a family tradition. I abandon myself to dreams of the past, I forget my own

troubles in musing over that wonderful venture of Columbus, those daring maritime raids of Doria, Spinola's great sword-strokes, the gilded fantasies of the Doges; though a good Frenchman, I am conscious of a sort of ancestral yearning when I look once more upon these mighty emblems of the proud Republic of Genoa in its palmy days, a Republic where strength and dignity walked hand in hand with popular liberty." (February 13, 1882.)

CHAPTER XIX

DEATH

The Second Freycinet Cabinet (January 30, 1882)—Bombardment of Alexandria—Gambetta's Last Speech (July 18)—Resignation of the Freycinet Cabinet—Death of Gambetta.

On January 30 the new Cabinet was installed, with M. de Freycinet, its head, at the Foreign Office, Léon Say at the Treasury, Jules Ferry as Minister of Public Instruction, Admiral Jauréguiberry as Minister of Marine.

It has been seen how, before the fall of the Gambetta Ministry, the Powers had rejected the scheme of exclusive action by England and France in the Egyptian affair. Even if Gambetta had remained in office, he could not have pursued the policy outlined in his note of January 7, namely, joint action; England was backing out. A week after the crisis, on February 2, Germany, Austria, Russia and Italy assured the Ottoman Government that the *status quo* in Egypt, in the form established by the Firmans of the Sultans and by various European settlements, could not be modified without a previous understanding between the Powers and the suzerain State. England having come round to this view, the Freycinet Ministry was of one mind in thinking that we should have to make approaches to the other Governments. On February 7, the British Cabinet discussed the prospect of a mandate given to England and France in the name of the European Concert. Bismarck approved of this course. He said to our ambassador, Baron de Courcel: "Should the two maritime Powers feel inclined to take action, and should the other Powers give them a mandate to do so, this solution is one that I might countenance." A few days later, on

March 1, Busch, the Under-Secretary of State, repeated the Chancellor's suggestion in more explicit terms: "The German Chancellery," he observed to M. de Courcel, "would be ready to admit the two Powers as Europe's mandatories for restoring order in the valley of the Nile." As for the Russian Government, it not only accepted this mode of action, but spoke warmly in its favour, as having proved its value in 1860. On May 11 M. de Freycinet announced in the Chamber that he would act in harmony with the Powers, that the "predominant and privileged status of France and England was recognised by them and regarded as beyond dispute." This was the right plan: joint action, in virtue of a European mandate. It was in strict accordance with the Treaty, and a reasonable compromise between France's interests and Europe's claims. Here was solid ground, where we ought to have been able to keep our feet. Why did we fail to do so? Why, in the space of a few days, did we completely lose grip of the situation?

On the day after making this announcement in the Chamber M. de Freycinet sent our new ambassador in London, Tissot, a telegram which was to be communicated to Lord Granville: "France and England would each send six men-of-war light enough to enter Alexandria Harbour. In the event of a landing, we should have recourse to Turkish troops, under the control of the two Powers." Why this calling in of Turkish troops, which, despite their control by the two Powers, entirely altered the aspect of affairs? The following explanation is given by M. de Freycinet in his book, *La Question d'Egypte* (1915): "Bismarck, without positively refusing his adherence to the mandate, laid great stress on the advantages of using Turkish troops," and England, "fearing, perhaps, that our force would be superior in numbers, had made representations to the same effect." Bismarck was anxious to please the Sultan, in order to promote German influence at Constantinople. He had expressed this latest view in conversations; it was not recorded in any written note. The change of policy was a serious blow to France's privileged position.

Since the Khedive's security was still threatened, M. de Freycinet on May 23 gave notice of his intention to propose a Conference, and in agreement with the London Cabinet actually did so on June 2. A lively scene ensued in the Chamber. M. de Freycinet, being plied with questions, disclaimed any idea of adventures, of a French expeditionary force. To calm the apprehensions of the Chamber, he discreetly hinted at the possibility that troops other than French, in other words Turkish, would be employed.

Gambetta interposed. "When I heard it stated that, not content with having thrown away the special and peculiar position allotted to France and England in Egypt by tradition and by Firmans of the Porte; not content with entrusting the Concert of Europe (in other words, the opponents of this state of things) with the adjudication and settlement of a dispute in which the question is not one of dismembering the Ottoman Empire, but merely one of upholding the *status quo* regulated by treaties—when I heard it had been determined beforehand, once and for all, that under no circumstances whatsoever would France embark upon military intervention, then I remembered how one day Berryer had taken his stand at this rostrum on a similar occasion and exclaimed: 'You must not speak like that! We don't speak like that of France!'" M. de Freycinet protested: "What I said and what I still say is that we shall not rely on our isolated judgment in the Egyptian question. We shall go to the Concert of Europe and settle the question by common agreement."—Gambetta: "You have just betrayed to Europe the secret of your weakness. All they need do is to bully you, and they will get your consent to anything."—The Cabinet, and France as well, emerged from this debate with distinct loss of strength.

The affair dragged on. The Conference did not meet in Constantinople until June 23. The French Government opened the ball by proposing and securing the acceptance of a protocol which declared that "while the Conference lasted, the Powers would abstain from any isolated action in Egypt." England at once had these words added: "Except in a case of *force majeure*, such as the necessity of protecting the lives

of their nationals." The Conference then decided upon Turkish intervention. (July 6.)

On June 11, however, a riot had broken out in Alexandria. More than forty Europeans had been killed and sixty-six wounded. Towards the end of June the Egyptians reinforced the batteries commanding the entrance to Alexandria harbour. England had not waited for the murders nor even for the opening of the Conference before arming herself for action. She had already mustered considerable naval forces between Malta and Alexandria. On June 15, Salisbury said in the House of Lords: "Some suggest that Europe may take it amiss; England knows that she is free to attain her political ends by herself, if she cannot do so in company with the other Powers."

A rumour got abroad that the passes of the harbour were going to be blocked. Admiral Seymour, afraid for his ships, warned the Egyptians that at the slightest sign of anything untoward he would proceed to a bombardment. At the same time he invited the French admiral who had been sent into Alexandrian water in concert with the British division to take such measures as were needed for the security of both detachments. On July 4 Lord Lyons communicated to M. de Freycinet the orders given to Admiral Seymour and asked him whether we were going to issue similar instructions to Admiral Conrad. M. de Freycinet declared to Lord Lyons that "if Admiral Seymour ventured on a bombardment, we could not join him in that enterprise." Our squadron received orders to weigh anchor and proceed to Port Said. On the 11th, the British ships opened fire, and Lord Granville telegraphed to Lord Dufferin, ambassador in Constantinople, that, so far as Her Majesty's Government could see, a resort to force was the only means of putting an end to a state of things that had become deplorable." On the 15th the British landed troops and seized the reins of government.

The French Cabinet then proposed an occupation of the Suez Canal, in concert with the English, and on July 18 asked for a credit of 8,000,000 francs on behalf of the Ministry of Marine. Gambetta mounted the rostrum for the last time:

"Let not France be shorn of her heritage! The more ancient it is, the more sacred!" "A Bismarckian trap!" someone interrupted. "One must give that statesman his due—he who is as firm and self-restrained as he is daring at certain moments; he never troubles his head about anything that is not closely bound up with German interests. It is absurd to see Prince Bismarck's finger in every plan and every action. Do nothing without mature consideration of your own interests.

"Some have spoken of the 'national Egyptian party,' of 'Egyptian nationality'; they have found out that this people, which has been in bondage for forty centuries, is on the eve of creating or re-discovering the principles of 1789 in the subterranean vaults of the Pyramids! . . . It is not for the sake of Egyptian nationality or the Egyptian national party that we ought to go to Egypt; it is for the French nation. Unfortunately there are people who have come to the conclusion that Arabi Pacha is a very formidable power, and that the Egyptian army needs at least 50,000 Frenchmen to disperse it!"

The Anglo-French entente must be preserved at all costs, to meet any situation that may arise: "I know no other policy that would be any help to us in the most terrible crisis that we might have to face. What I say to you to-day, I say with a deep sense of insight into the future: never break off the alliance with England. I am a sincere friend of the English, but not to such an extent that I would sacrifice French interests on their behalf. Besides, you may rest assured that the English, like the good statesmen they are, will think well only of allies who can make themselves respected, who do not lose sight of their own interests. What I dread more than anything is that you may hand over to England, for good and all, territories, rivers and rights of way where your title to live and to trade is no less valid than theirs. That is the spirit in which I shall vote for the credits. I give you the money; I think the sum is inadequate; but I shall give it you with the assurance that what the Chamber is ratifying to-day is not a matter of credits, but a matter of future policy:

the Mediterranean remaining a theatre for French activities, and Egypt being torn from the grasp of Moslem fanaticism, sheltered from these raids of a barrack-room soldiery, to come once more within the ambit of European politics. That is why I give you the money, and that is why my friends can associate their vote with mine."

I witnessed this sitting from the Strangers' Gallery. I can picture the scene as if it were yesterday. The great orator began slowly, in a low, solemn tone; such was Mirabeau's way. The mighty engine, just as it was getting ready to start, seemed to be straining itself, to be summoning from its innermost vitals the forces it was about to unchain. Little by little, the movement grew faster; at last he burst forth into flame, a flame that seared and devoured all that lay in its path. The speaker had to face that coalition of extremist sections which was to become a stock feature of the parliamentary game for more than thirty years; and at the same time he had against him the friends of the Elysée. Under the pitiless light of that glass-roofed hall, I saw that hostile throng, their eyes glaring distrust, waiting to pounce. At times, his words swept over the shuddering Assembly like a gale, and their heads bowed beneath the blast like ears of corn. It was a natural force, a cyclone. Every note was struck, from mournful irony and savage indignation to the swelling organ-roll of glorious memories and the magic clarion-call of hope. When he spoke of "the doctors of the law around the mosque of El-Ahzar," it was as if one were looking at a picture by Delacroix. And all through the incisive reasoning of the man who had lately held office and knew to a nicety how far we had to reckon with the factor of military revolt and Arabi's power of resistance, one was conscious of a scorn that he did not trouble to disguise for the blind infatuation of ignorance and frivolity which, from age to age, fly in the face of experience and wisdom. A young hothead, on the Extreme Left, had ventured on a misguided interruption: "Don't jeer at the dawn of the Egyptian 1789!" (just as, in after days, others believed in the "Liberalism" of the Young Turks, etc.). Gambetta nailed him to his seat with an Olym-

pian retort. Obviously, he took a malicious delight in playing with the difficulty; with something of an artist's joy in his craft did he use his power to infuriate his opponents. In speaking of the English, after remarking that he wanted to be their friend, not their dupe, and that they only respect those who can hold their own with them, he pointed out the differences in their colonising methods, according as they have to govern peoples of their own race and standard of civilisation, or peoples who for centuries have lived "under the lash." "Under the lash!" At these words, as at a blow from a whip, more than one generous and humane soul winced.

Throughout this great fighting speech there ran as a refrain the cries of the patriot, the moving accents of the Republican deeply wounded by unjust suspicions, the appeal to painful memories: "I have the right to say that both before and after 1870 my chief and most abiding care has been for the security of France; that I should loathe myself, should deny myself the honour of ever addressing my country again, if I could bring myself to throw anything in the scale against her future and her glory!" When he exclaimed, in a peroration that still rings in our ears: "I give you the money, but on one condition: the Mediterranean remaining the theatre of French action," the style was certainly a little slipshod: a "sea" that remains a "theatre" of "activities" would hardly commend itself to one who chooses his words carefully; but we saw the blue sea, crowded with sails, the great French lake conquered for civilisation by our fathers, all France's achievements in the East, her glory, her prestige for centuries past, since the Crusades. There was in this picture a wizardry of vivid presentation, a colour that could never fade from our minds. In the ardour of our twenty years we were fairly carried away. This man, still so young and so fascinating, who embodied a tragic page in our history, also incarnated in our eyes that which is dearest to every heart—hope.

While he was speaking, his mother lay dying at St. Mandé. As he stepped down from the rostrum, his friends hurried him away. While bending over his mother on her deathbed,

he heard the newsboys shouting "Gambetta's Speech!"—the speech that left him still aglow with passion. He had his dead mother taken to Nice: "All alone, I am escorting my poor mother to her last resting-place, down there, facing the sea, beneath the sun and the flowers, near her belovèd sister." Alas, how soon he was to join her!

Meanwhile, in London, the Cabinet voted a credit of £2,280,000. In Paris the Senate, by 205 votes to 5, granted the 8,000,000 francs demanded for the protection of the Suez Canal; almost the entire Right abstained from voting (July 25). In the Chamber, on the 29th, M. Clemenceau opposed intervention in any shape or form: "Europe is swarming with soldiers, everyone is waiting. The Powers reserve their liberty for the future; let us reserve that of France." M. de Freycinet advocated intervention on a limited scale, the eventual protection of the Canal. He got no more than 75 votes. Gambetta's friends voted against the proposal. M. de Freycinet's supporters took him to task, maintaining that a half-hearted intervention was worse than none at all. It was, indeed, not a little strange to censure the Government for not doing its utmost, and at the same time not even allow it to do the least that could be done. But after all, even if Gambetta's friends had backed the Cabinet, it would not have had a majority. France's day was over in that land which her genius had fertilised. After being all in all there for fifty years, she was in one hour reduced to a cipher. Our refusal to occupy the Suez Canal shut us out from Egypt for ever. The Freycinet Ministry resigned (July 30). On September 13, at Tel-el-Kebir, the Egyptian army was put to rout by General Wolseley in the space of twenty minutes.

The Mediterranean, together with the Rhine, has always been the great object of France's aspirations. For centuries it was a Frankish sea. At every period of political turmoil and religious disputes our influence in the East has undergone a crisis. Our greatest kings, our greatest Ministers, Henri IV. and Richelieu, for instance, managed to promote, side by side, our forward drive on the Eastern marches and

in the Southern sea. Could we, after 1870, remain both on the Vosges and in the Mediterranean? Jules Ferry and Gambetta thought we could, and the present writer, who was then just entering upon the stage of public life, shared their view. To-day, history has given her verdict. In the most terrible war of all, the possession of a vast colonial empire, very much larger than the one that was then in question—for, besides Tunisia, it includes the Soudan, the Congo, Madagascar, Indo-China and Morocco—so far from proving a source of weakness to France, has turned out to be a tower of strength, notably increasing her resources both in men and material. We can all see this now, after the event. At that time, however, the country had barely emerged from ill-fated ventures and military disasters. The difficulties of the Algerian conquest, the Mexican fiasco and memories of the invasion still weighed on our souls like an incubus. Everywhere we expected to find obstacles in our path, to be thrown off our track, to be enmeshed in snares. Men, gold, perhaps blood, would be needed; we were inclined to hoard what we had left. Many Frenchmen felt that it was foolhardy to divert French troops and French money to remote enterprises, while her flank was exposed to the enemy. We did not care to dismantle the frontier; we still dreaded some Bismarckian thrust; we asked ourselves apprehensively whether, in going so far afield, we should not be playing into Germany's hands. France, though already on the upward path, lacked self-confidence; she still bore the burden of the vanquished and the weak.

There were some who held that in continuing to act in concert with England in Egypt we ran the risk of falling out with her. Even if the worst had come to the worst, there is one thing that the French forget too often and the English never lose sight of—the value of guarantees. Once they have seized hold, they never let go. On any assumption, to abandon our rights, our position in Egypt, without getting anything in return was unutterable folly. We ought to have been on the spot.

Throughout all this period of our history, France seems to

live under the brooding shadow of the foreigner's will. Always Bismarck has a finger in our quarrels, always he inflames and exploits our dissensions. Prussia had been the cancer of Germany; Bismarck was the evil genius of Europe and the scourge of France. Accursèd be defeat, not only for piling ruin upon ruin, but for leaving so many faint hearts and feeble hands in its trail! A conquered nation is never a nation of the free. Our children, at any rate, will not have to endure the agonies that we went through long after the date at which our present story ends down to the eve of the war of 1914!

At the time when these events were unfolding, public opinion, for the most part, as always happens in such cases, had no inkling of their significance. We were not told the details, we did not know what was going on behind the scenes. Gambetta had been under a delusion as to the attitude of the British Government. He had wanted to bind it irrevocably, and had thought that it was already amenable to his wishes. The British Ministers, knowing that his position was somewhat shaky, had refused to commit themselves very far. Even before the fall of his Ministry, Europe had wished to have a voice in the matter, and as soon as he was overthrown the London Cabinet came round to the views of the other Powers. Bismarck, who in February and even at the beginning of March had acquiesced in the intervention of England and France in the name of the European concert, some days later advanced the claims of Turkey. The Freycinet Ministry, compelled to rely on the elements that had brought about Gambetta's downfall, was set the difficult task of satisfying England, Germany and the Chamber. The whole period of French history that we are studying is dominated by the German terror. We cannot really understand the conflicts of the National Assembly, the crisis of 1877 and the Tunisian and Egyptian affairs, unless we bear in mind the perpetual menace of Bismarck. The disaster of 1882 in the Mediterranean was the direct outcome of our defeats in 1870 on the Continent.

We may now form an estimate of Gambetta as an orator.

He ranks with Mirabeau, Vergniaud and Danton as among the greatest speakers of France since the Revolution. Like Berryer, however, he will hardly bear reading, he had to be seen and heard.

His style is as a rule unwieldy, copious, loose-knit. He can write well when he lays himself out to do so; witness the portrait of Lachaud, sketched when he was twenty-four. His speech on the plebiscite in 1869 is a more compact piece of work than his popular harangues of 1873 and 1874, which he delivered off-hand, heedless of form; and naturally his fighting speeches were less elaborate than those in which he expounded his doctrines. At first he writes them out in full, but it is not long before he contents himself with making out a skeleton—exordium, middle and peroration—and this he submits to a friend for approval. If ever he wanders from the track thus marked out, his friendly critic sets him right. In a later phase he tests his arguments beforehand in private conversations, in gatherings of intimates. As he goes on, he prepares and revises less and less. He almost invariably uses too many words; he has not or will not take the time to be brief. Like Bismarck and Cavour, he recked nothing of literary polish; all he cared about was the result; all he aimed at was to grip his audience, to convince it, to lead it whither he would. It is true that a political speech is primarily a weapon, not a work of art, but there is no reason why it should not be both. In order to be great in action, a man need not be a poor speaker; Demosthenes is a case in point. Oratory should not smell of the lamp, but on the other hand it should not fall outside the province of literary criticism. We may grant, indeed, that a superabundance of words, which enables the improviser to see his sentences coming, is often very attractive to the ear, though it repels the reader. In writing, reiteration is a weakness, in speaking it is a source of strength. But the effect thus produced is evanescent; nothing remains except a few memorable phrases, a few bright coins from the speaker's mint, the rest dies with him. There is no law that forbids us to address posterity as well, and only injudicious admirers will hold up as a merit what

is certainly a defect. Style counts for little in a man's political achievements, but without it his reputation for eloquence cannot live. Nor are we here girding at commonplaces or irregularities. Commonplaces are the orator's daily bread; political audiences are soon nettled by a speaker who sees further than they; if his ideas are in advance of theirs, they are baffled and disconcerted; hence the lack of harmony between the spirit of the Assemblies and the intuitive genius of a poet like Lamartine, or the profound calculations of a political philosopher like Tocqueville. As for irregularities, they may sometimes invest a speech with singular charm. No, we are thinking of the vagueness of language which arises from looseness of thought, illogical constructions, mixed metaphors, nay, even solecisms which the Tribune—great lover of letters though he was—helped to introduce into the currency of the language, but which would not be found in any writer of the seventeenth or eighteenth century; yet for all that, with his impetuous outbursts, his flashes of fire and enthusiasm, his sweeping eagle-flights, the cries that spurt forth from the very depths of his being, his gestures that bespoke now the wrath of the insurgent democracy, now the anguish of invaded France, that blend of suppleness and strength, of audacity and gentleness, of familiarity and vehemence, he must be reckoned as one of the most amazing oratorical forces of our time. He was a volcano that belched forth slag and turbid smoke together with burning lava.

On August 13 Freycinet had been succeeded by Duclerc. When the Chambers reassembled, Gambetta resumed his old position as Chairman of the Committee for Army Affairs. He now went on working at his plan and pulling his various strings in Europe. Skobeleff, the very day after he set foot in France, secured an introduction to him. It was arranged that the general and the statesman should dine together in private, in order that they might chat at their leisure. "We met at six o'clock in the evening," said Skobeleff, "and did not part company till two in the morning. His bright, sparkling eyes had in them a humorous, kindly twinkle which lent a peculiar charm to his talk. When he

grew excited, his nostrils would dilate, his lips wore a disdainful curve, his eyes flashed superbly and his whole cast of features assumed an air of majesty. He had a wonderful instinct for military matters, and adored the army. The army, strangely enough, seeing that he was not a member of its caste, had claimed him for its own; it relied upon him, if not to lead it, at any rate to shape its future."

His friends had just founded, under his patronage, the "Patriots' League," with Alfred Mézières, Félix Faure, Paul Déroulède, Ferdinand Buisson, Édouard Détaille, Antonin Mercié, Alphonse de Neuville, Jules Massenet, Joseph Reinach, Sansbœuf and others. The League had for its object "the revision of the Treaty of Frankfort and the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine to France, and for its task the fostering of military and patriotic education and propaganda. Henri Martin was its president. "To accept a first mutilation," said the venerable historian, "is to court a second dismemberment."

Gambetta's health, however, was more seriously undermined than ever, and his fits of despondency were growing more and more frequent. On July 6, after upholding before the Committee his ideas regarding the army, he exclaimed: "It seems to me a paltry proceeding to deny myself my true happiness merely in order to follow the unsatisfying mirage of political renown. Two days ago, however, I was able to achieve something fairly useful; I had my scheme for military reconstruction approved by the committee. By this last shred I still cling to the interests of our country; I shall enter upon this final conflict, and if I fail I can face with equanimity the prospect of no longer wearying my purblind contemporaries with my designs for a national revival."

As if with a presentiment that the end is near, he opens his heart to his friends and already, in some way, to posterity: "I regret nothing, for I have never acted but in the higher interests of my party. Sooner or later, the day will dawn when men will do me justice. Even if it does not come till after my death, I shall not grieve. I pin my faith upon history. If we can abide the supreme verdict of history, the

arrows of slander and calumny fly past us without even grazing our skin." Yet they did wound him, for all these brave words. To be hated is always depressing. He had to taste, until the bitter end, the dregs of base credulity and the gall of ignoble souls. If he did not answer his traducers, if he begged his friends not to answer them, he could not bring himself to ignore any of their accusations. In fact, they seemed to afford him a sort of grim and poignant pleasure. Just before his death he had read to him the articles which made mock of his approaching end. (Ranc, *Souvenirs*.) He consoled himself by calling to mind the famous scene of Richelieu's farewell to Father Joseph: the Capuchin monk with the shadow of death already upon him, and the Cardinal bending over his old confessor and announcing to him—the traveller to that unknown country where no news of this world ever penetrates—the latest victory of his army in Alsace: "Father Joseph! Father Joseph! Brisach is ours!"

And now at last he is to realise his fondest dream, the marriage that he had been planning for so long: "As soon as you wish it, my dear Léonie, we will take advantage of the dispensations of our civil code, here or beyond the frontier, whichever you choose. I shall not be satisfied at heart until the day when you become in name, as you already are in fact, my inseparable and eternal partner." His mother was dead, he had fallen from power, and she who loved him now consented to become his wife. On September 21 he writes from Les Frêtes: "I feel sure that you are already settled at Ville d'Avray and that, as is only right, you will act as mistress of the house, thus preparing yourself, as quickly as possible, for the part you are destined to play." In this happiness, so eagerly craved, he is to find balm for his stricken soul: "I feel more and more assured that I am going to be happy. I am glad to have hit upon so ideal a companion, and I shall very soon be joining her who alone can now bring sunshine into my life, soothe my troubles and give me the infinite joy of owning a pearl beyond price. It is this perfect concord of our souls that links us so divinely in a union such as few can ever know."

At the beginning of October he returned to Les Jardies. The announcement of his marriage was communicated to his father and to a few intimate friends. He lengthened his stay in the country, and was still there when winter came on. On November 27, about eleven o'clock in the morning, he was wounded in his right hand by a bullet from a revolver which he was incautiously handling. In a few days' time he seemed to have recovered. "In January," he said, "I shall make my reappearance with a good-humoured speech, a speech of reconciliation." Towards the middle of December, however, he began to feel acute pain in his right side. Appendicitis, followed by perityphlitis, set in. An operation might perhaps have saved him, but the doctors did not care to risk it. Intestinal perforation brought on death on December 31, a few minutes before midnight. He was then aged forty-four years, eight months and nineteen days. A woman kissed him on the forehead and he vanished into the darkness, for ever.

Paris and France honoured Gambetta with a splendid funeral, a national and intensely human ceremony. In that tomb France was interring a part of her own life. The body was taken to Paris and placed in the Palais Bourbon. For three days deputations from all over the country came to pay their respects to the dead. Among the visitors was Victor Hugo, with his grandchildren. An innumerable throng filed through the room, day and night. The funeral took place on January 7, 1883. The hearse bore on its pall the heraldic crown of the city of Thann. Behind his coffin marched a representative gathering from the length and breadth of France, not the France of the Treaty of Frankfort, stripped by fraud and violence, but the real France, France in her entirety, Alsace and Lorraine at the head. Strasburg, Metz and Colmar were among the leaders; the procession was headed by men from the captured cities. Gambetta in death passed by the statue of Strasburg in mourning. Was not this a triumph in the grave, a harbinger of victories to come?

The Père-Lachaise cemetery was not reached till nightfall. Brisson, Peyrat and Billot, the War Minister, made speeches. Henri Martin lamented "the Fate that had cut short, after

fourteen crowded years, a career of three phases, each of them alone enough to win a man imperishable glory." He repeated what a famous royalist had said of a famous revolutionary: "He was magnanimous." Darkness was now coming on apace. Paul Bert had no time to express all the warm and passionate devotion that a noble heart had inspired in other noble hearts: "They have celebrated your fame, they have extolled your patriotism, your matchless eloquence, your ardent spirit and your ever-active brain, your genius that has saved the life of the Republic and the honour of our country. They have told us of your dreams for the future, your unconquerable hope, of the open wound of France that was an open wound in your own heart. But for us all this is not enough. We must tell the world what you were for your friends day by day, we must speak of your wondrous, unrivalled charity, your kindliness and seductive grace, your never-varying good humour, your infectious outbursts of friendly or joyous emotion, all that full-blooded vitality that Death, as if grudging it, has so cruelly quenched. Where are now your winning smile, your firm, affectionate clasp of the hand, your gentle look, your frank, hearty laugh? How you gripped us all, how happy we all were to be yours! What words of ours can convey the brightness of your intellect, the warmth of your heart? For it is that heart we loved above all things; it was by your heart that you held us in thrall. For us, it always stood wide open, a fountain at which we drank without stint. It was open even to your enemies, for you never knew how to hate; it was open even to those whose treason broke it in the end! Let all men know, at least, how dearly you were loved, how dearly you loved in your turn! It is no detraction from your glory to say that you were not merely great!"

Yes, it is with the heart that great things are done. The older we get, the more inclined we are to put goodness first, then common sense, then talent and intellect last of all.

"The crowd went down the hill again and scattered into the night, bearing with it the sorrow and, as it were, the remorse for this career so soon lopped off." (Hanotaux.) It

did not know that this stormy and splendid life, wholly given up to the loftiest causes—patriotism, freedom and justice—had also been a great life of love. For France, this death was a defeat; for Germany, a deliverance.

His ashes were conveyed to Nice, to join those of his humble forefathers, near the azure sea and the mountains of snow and golden sunshine whose radiance and harmony had entered into his soul. In the evening, as day faded, Spuller, distraught with grief, bade him the last farewell.

The death of Gambetta closes the first period of the Third Republic. Throughout those thirteen years he had been among the leading actors, at times the protagonist, in the most momentous events: the fall of the Second Empire, the war with Germany, the 1875 Constitution and the fall of the Parliamentary Republic, the Sixteenth of May, the Tunisian and Egyptian affairs. His part in these epoch-making crises had been now important, now decisive. He had been glorious in war and glorious in peace.

His work, which some of his contemporaries thought ephemeral, has endured. If France, after the disasters of 1870 and the suicide of the Monarchy, has succeeded in founding a system of government that can live, if, after so many revolutions and ill-fated experiments, the Republic has won its battles both within and without, it is to him, more than anyone, that the credit is due.

The question has often been raised, what his part would have been if he had lived. In these rather artificial attempts at conjectural history, the various sections of the Republican party have contrived to claim his policy for their own, because his aim was to uphold the unity of the party by means of compromises and mutual concessions, and to flit from one wing to another of his army in order to lead it, as a compact force, to the conquest of power and then, when the victory was won, to consolidate the conquest. This explains why, on certain paramount questions, he put forward different views at different times, always pursuing, though by divergent paths, the same grand design: at home, the triumph of the Republic, abroad, the regeneration of France. And just as

in 1877 he did not follow the same policy as in 1869, so in 1881 he did not follow the same policy as in 1877 :

" Each shares in him, all have him as a whole."

A sort of cult, a fervent and passionate cult, has sprung up around his memory. Every year a stream of faithful pilgrims wends its way to the little house of Les Jardies, the resting-place of his heart, adorned with the coat-of-arms of every town in Alsace and Lorraine, with these two mottoes : *In clade decus; spes in luctu* (" Honour in defeat, hope in mourning "); and the following inscription carved by Alsace-Lorrainers : " Our hopes are still bound up with his memory, as they were linked with his life." Others have come, in a never-ending throng, to kindle their souls at this flame. Even during the great war, on April 6, 1916, we were at Les Jardies with M. de Freycinet—who, once more a Minister of the Republic and of the new national defence, still hale and upright in his green old age, recalled that other war—and with those who have distinguished themselves by an unswerving loyalty, Antonin Dubost, Gaston Thomson, Joseph Reinach, Péphau, Étienne—Étienne who every year, for thirty-eight years past, has gone to Nice and placed a wreath upon his tomb.

Gambetta was dearly loved in his lifetime, and is still loved no less dearly. His name is a part of France's religion : what more glorious dream could a great soul cherish ? In the blaze of that sunlight, his faults, his mistakes, his inconsistencies disappear from view. France no longer sees aught but this—that when everything had crashed into ruin, when all seemed lost, there arose one man who bore up the flag, with indomitable faith, to the end. She loves him vanquished no less than if he had been victorious. Vanquished, do I say ? Nay, he *is* victorious. Yes, he is victorious to-day by our side. It is because he held out in 1870 that France did not lose the world's esteem or her own self-respect, that she kept her rank in the human family, that she raised herself and fulfilled the destiny that he had planned. There can be no great nation or great man without a great idea. A nation like France does not own itself finally beaten because of three

defeats: that is what he felt, that is what he proclaimed with irresistible force, with deathless eloquence. From 1914 to 1918 his soul fought in company with our heroes. His ideal, the union of all Frenchmen in a victorious Republic, has proved a reality. In the hour when France signed the peace of Right he was present in our midst and took part in the ceremony.

On December 9, 1918, when we entered Strasburg, we read, on a house in the Grand-Rue, the following scrawl, an artless and touching effusion of popular feeling: "Sleep in peace, Gambetta! At last the glorious dawn of the day you dreamed of has arisen for us!"

France, Alsace and Lorraine have always given themselves freely to those who loved them well and never doubted that they were sound.

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